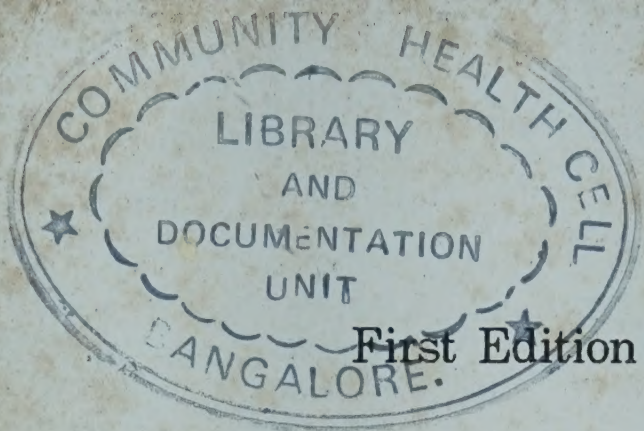


India's Saffron Surge : Renaissance or Fascism?

Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi





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Edited and published by

Anand Kumtha for

Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi

254 Ambedkar Nagar

M.I.D.C. Road No. 8

P. O. Box 19417

Andheri (East)

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A collection of political writings

Published by

Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi

254 Ambodkar Nagar, M.I.D.C. Road No. 8, P. O. Box 19417
Andheri (East), Bombay 400 093, INDIA

About Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi

Our country is at the crossroads. It is being hacked into pieces by not only communal riots and pogroms, but also casteist massacres. It is being bled by not only secessionist forces, but also by the paramilitary, who slaughter innocent people in the name of fighting secessionism. To top it all is the mountain of foreign debt draining our country and our people. Already our rulers have mortgaged the country to the IMF, whose structural adjustment programme is not only destroying our industries, but exacerbating mass unemployment, stifling inflation, agonizing pauperization and intense misery. All democratic struggles of the people are being crushed and fascism is being hatched because even parliamentary democracy has become a burden for our rulers.

While most political parties are lining up to either directly or indirectly pave the way for fascism, the people of our country are desperately searching for a **POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE** which can lead them out of this nightmare. This **ALTERNATIVE** is being built and forged unheard and unsung in different parts of the country where the best sons and daughters of our land are challenging the policies of the ruling classes.

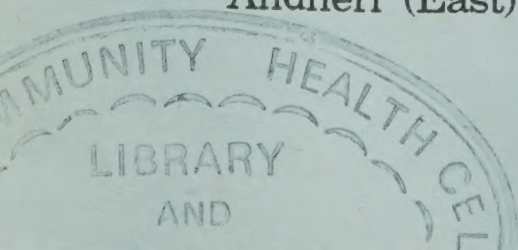
The ***Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi*** is an anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, political front which is committed to building and strengthening such an **ALTERNATIVE**. It believes there is an inextricable connection between the structural adjustment programme dictated by the IMF and the growth of fascism. **IMF SLAVERY TODAY MEANS FASCISM TOMORROW**. We cannot oppose the fascist forces without opposing the stranglehold of the IMF over our economy and polity.

We call upon you to join us and support us in our endeavor. You can support us by selling this book to your colleagues and friends, contributing financially, helping us build a network of sympathisers and participating in our struggles and programmes. Most important, you can be an activist in the struggle against fascism and imperialism.

Contact or write to us today!

BHARATIYA JANWADI AGHADI

254 Ambedkar Nagar, M.I.D.C. Road No. 8, P. O. Box 19417
Andheri (East), Bombay 400 093, INDIA.



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Introduction

IF there is one explosive idea that is setting the agenda for India today, it is *Hindutva*. No idea evokes as powerful emotions, as powerful sympathies as well as antipathies as *Hindutva*. And yet, no idea is as little understood, or as much misunderstood, as *Hindutva*.

Hindutva has nothing to do with spirituality but everything to do with political economy. It has little to do with religious doctrine, but has everything to do with political ideology. It has very little to do with Hinduism, but everything to do with an aggressive form of cultural nationalism. It is incidentally related to Hindus, but inextricably linked with class interests — ruling class interests. It appears to be connected with India's past, but is actually an omen of the future.

For some, *Hindutva* heralds the age of India's renaissance. For others, it reflects India's march towards fascism. It depends from which class point you view it.

For a powerful section of India's ruling classes as well as a growing section of India's middle classes, *Hindutva* is renaissance. With Nehruvianism, the ruling ideology of India for four decades, in tatters; with the Congress Party riddled with scamsters and shamsters; with structural adjustment engendering all-round social maladjustments — *Hindutva* appears for them as an idea whose time has come. An idea which promises to uphold the new world order without compromising on national honour. An idea which promises to resurrect the social privileges of the past even while providing the modern-day goodies of the present. An idea which aims to revive the flagging spirits of a nation in crisis, by injecting into it an assertive and aggressive 'religious' identity.

But there is another India. An India oppressed and suppressed. An India living by its toil and surviving by its tears. The India of the workers and poor peasants. The India of the landless and the homeless. The India of the Dalits, the Adivasis and the backward castes. No amount of doses of *Hindutvawad* can provide them a life of dignity and respect. *Hindutva* can only mean fascism for them. Fascism, because the *Hindutva* campaign not just threatens but has already disrupted their day to day lives, broken their homes, snatched away their meagre livelihoods and even butchered their innocent ones. For, despite the halo of righteousness worn by the *Hindutvawadis*, it is a fact that its leadership is inextricably linked to reactionary sections of finance and monopoly capital, former feudalists, present-day property speculators, big traders and stock brokers — sections of the ruling classes who are finding even the so-called democracy which exists in India today a burden. For these sections, *Hindutva* promises to change the political system while perpetuating the existing material conditions of life which degrade the masses and rob them of their human spirit.

This book is a collection of articles written by activists of the *Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi* which is committed to fighting not only exploitation and social oppressions, but also fascism in whatever form it may appear. The writers are not professional journalists, but social and political activists. And because they are activists, they take the ideas

propagated by the *Hindutvawadis* seriously. As activists they have felt it is their duty to first understand *Hindutva*, so as to more effectively challenge its claims.

The articles in this book cover a period of five years — from 1988 to 1993. It is this period that has witnessed the lightning charge of the saffron brigade. The articles therefore reflect the resurgence of *Hindutva*, not in abstraction, but in the context of the major political events that have shaken our country. They therefore cover the resurgence of *Hindutva* in its historical context. Beginning with the heating of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue when Rajiv was still prime minister, the canvas of this book covers the ninth general elections which brought the minority V. P. Singh government to power. It covers the fall of this government after Mr. L. K. Advani's *Rath Yatra* and the brief spell of the Chandrashekhar government, culminating in the tenth general elections which brought a minority Congress government back to power. The canvas covers the period which witnessed the most drastic changes in the economy ushered in by the Narasimha Rao government at the behest of the IMF. It covers the sordid build up to demolish the Babri Masjid, by the BJP which aims to become India's ruling party soon. It covers the most macabre communal riots and blood-thirsty pogroms against Muslims in the post-demolition phase. It ends with an article on the historic significance of the mass defence committees formed by the toiling people against fascist mobs and mobsters. The articles are not about events but attempt to penetrate the rival socio-economic and political forces behind the events. Many of the articles are sharp polemics which challenge the ideas of not only the *Hindutvawadis*, but also those of the centrists who are constantly having mock fights with the *Hindutvawadis*.

All the articles in the book have been arranged in chronological order with the exception of the first and last. The first article, *From Nehruvianism to Hindutvawad* provides the basic framework to understand the rise of the *Hindutvawadis* as a political force. The last article provides a glimpse of who can bring about their downfall.

With the exception of two articles, the remaining have all appeared in *The Voice of People Awakening* — a monthly committed to revolutionary democracy and anti-fascism. These articles have been brought together in this book not only because historical events have in the main confirmed their analyses, but because the lessons drawn out by them have not lost their significance, and have in fact become even more urgent today.

It is foolish to underestimate the magnetic appeal of the ideas put forward by the *Hindutvawadis*. The anti-fascist movement has to confront these ideas not defensively, but boldly. These ideas can be confronted boldly not by liberal secularists, but by those committed to a fundamental transformation of India. The liberal secularists, alarmed by the growth of the *Hindutvawadi* forces, have attempted to defend themselves by seeking refuge in the tattered ideological rags of Nehruvianism — in short by pleading for the status quo and preaching a saccharin form of communal harmony. This cannot effectively answer the *Hindutvawadis*, who because of their opposition to Nehruvianism **appear as the advocates of change**. The dilemma of the liberal secularists is understandable. They still hope that communalism and fascism can be opposed by relying on the liberalism of the ruling classes!

We, however, have no illusions on this score. If there is any force that can effectively oppose fascism, it is the toiling people of India, and for the toiling people of India the status quo has become unbearable. They want change — a fundamental change in the political economy, not 'structural adjustments'. As long as the liberal secularists refuse to voice this fundamental urge of the masses, they will have only themselves to blame if the masses are attracted to *Hindutva*.

This book has been published with the hope that it would stir at least a section of the liberal secularists, or for that matter even the *Hindutvawadis*, to question their premises and to convince them that India's renaissance can only be linked to the future and destiny of her toiling millions.

9 August 1993

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From Nehruvianism to *Hindutvawad*

I *T is impossible to understand India's march towards fascism unless we analyse the struggle between Nehruvianism and Hindutvawad; unless we understand how the ruling ideology of Nehruvianism is being challenged by the rival ideology of Hindutvawad. Why and how did Nehruvianism serve the ruling classes for four decades in India and why is it losing its appeal today? This question has to be squarely confronted by the anti-fascist movement if it has to understand the magnetic attraction Hindutvawad has for large sections of the people today. This editorial published in The Voice of People Awakening in March 1993, attempts to answer this question. It provides the necessary background to better appreciate the lightning charge of the saffron brigade.*

EVERY ruling class requires a ruling ideology — a systematically elaborated theoretical framework which serves it as a guide to action. Nehruvianism was the ideology of the ruling classes in India for about four decades. We say “was” because today this ideology is in tatters. Not only is it being torn apart by the Congress Party — the prime torch-bearer and vehicle of this ideology. It is also being challenged as never before by a rival ideology — Hindutvawad.

One of the biggest weaknesses of the secular forces has been their tendency to dismiss *Hindutvawad* as merely rabid, reactionary communalism. Mechanically parroting that *Hindutvawad* is communal, only helps to fog its real nature, its real strength and its real goal — its goal of becoming a ruling ideology. Its goal of replacing a discredited and bankrupt Nehruvianism as the ruling ideology. Communalism can never be the ideology of any ruling class in modern society. It can only be a **means**. Unleashing the most rabid Hindu communalism against especially Muslims, is a means for *Hindutvawad*.

But a means for what? **It is a means to redefine nationalism. A means to generate a reactionary and aggressive nationalism to serve the ruling classes in crisis and in transition. A means to use this nationalism to reorganise State power on fascist lines.** It is only nationalism which can serve as an ideology of the bourgeois class in modern society. *Hindutvawad* is attempting to be the voice of a new militant nationalism to serve a ‘nation’ threatened by secessionism, diseased by corruption, disillusioned by Congressism and in the throes of a New Economic Policy which is converting the country into a neo-colony of imperialism. As lakhs of stickers splashed in the trains of Bombay proclaim: “*Bharatiyata to Nagarikta hai. Hindutva hi Rashtriyata hai.*” (Indianness is only citizenship. Only *Hindutva* is nationalism.) The sticker is not in the name of a Hindu gone crazy with communalism. It bears the name of a Muslim — Muzaffar Hussain, a prominent member of the BJP.

Therefore, the power of *Hindutvawad* as an ideology cannot be understood by **reducing it to communalism**. Its

power and appeal can only be fully comprehended by understanding **its claim to militant nationalism**. It is this magnetic appeal that has attracted to its ranks thousands of professors, doctors, scientists, lawyers, judges, journalists, writers, students etc. — many of them reasonable people — who would be the last to support, leave alone take part in, a communal pogrom against Muslims.

The anti-fascist movement therefore has to understand how Nehruvianism itself has created the grounds for the growth and development of *Hindutvawad*. We have to understand how and why the vacuum created by a disintegrating Nehruvian nationalism is being filled in today by an aggressive *Hindutvawad* nationalism. Only then can we understand who benefits from this militant reactionary nationalism and how it can be defeated.

One nation — One people!

In 1947, the Congress Party was the unrivalled party of Indian nationalism and Nehru was the chief ideologue and architect to define how this nationalism was to be translated into practice in 'Free India'. How did the Congress Party wrest this prime position for itself, despite heavily compromising with British imperialism in 1947 in the transfer of power; despite the gory partition of the country into India and Pakistan? The answer lies not only in the near unrivalled leadership of the Congress Party in the freedom struggle, but also because the Congress Party under the leadership of Nehru put forward and implemented a programme of 'national development' which then served not only the capitalist and landlord classes but also won the support of the broad masses of people. What were the different components of this Nehruvian nationalism?

First, the whole country was unified and centralised into one whole 'nation'. This was a major victory for Nehruvian nationalism. In 1947, not only was the country divided into India and Pakistan but more than 500-odd Rajas and Nawabs were given separate independences by the British. One can well imagine the map of the Indian nation when the British transferred power to the Congress Party in 1947. The first major task undertaken by the Congress Party was

integrating all these separate kingdoms and their rulers into the Indian union.

This integration was carried out by granting the most sweeping concessions to the Rajas and Nawabs. And yet the Congress Party carried the day, because a unified and integrated country not only created a strong psychological feeling of strength among the mass of Indians but also promised concrete advantages to a wide spectrum of classes. "*Saare jahan se achha, Hindustan hamara*" gave the monopoly capitalists an all-India market. For the rural peasantry it promised freedom from the yoke of the Rajas, the Nawabs and the feudal relations they had perpetuated. For the petit bourgeois and working class, it opened up wider possibilities of migration and employment in the private and public sector.

The then *Hindutvawadis*, who were the most vociferous supporters of the Hindu Rajas, were left out in the cold, as most of the Rajas integrated with the Congress, while only a few, sulking at their loss of power and grandeur, supported the *Hindutvawadis*. The Madhavrao Scindias joined the 'nationalist mainstream' while the few Rajmata Scindias joined the *Hindutvawadis* to protect 'Hindu culture and identity'. In Kashmir, the *Hindutvawadis* were in a worse plight. All throughout, they had supported Maharaja Hari Singh's decision to remain independent of both India and Pakistan. Here too the Congress Party upstaged them in the game of 'nationalism'. After the invasion of Kashmir by Pakistani-trained marauders, the Nehru government brought Kashmir into the Indian union with the help of the military, while promising Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference with a referendum and later on, a special status for Kashmir within India via section 370 of the Constitution.

Capitalism with a socialist face!

The second most important component of Nehruvian nationalism was its economic 'vision'. Peddled as socialism, this 'vision' **created a hegemonic role for the State bureaucratic class in the Indian economy and polity.** The State bureaucratic class hardly existed prior to 1947. It was the special creation of the Congress Party inspired by

Nehruvian nationalism. As a class it was a coalescence of the Congress politician who was bureaucratised and the Indian bureaucrat who was politicised. The latter included also the top echelons of the police, judiciary and the military.

Under the guise of non-alignment, the State bureaucratic class was given the role of using the contradictions between the Western Imperialist bloc and the Soviet led Warsaw bloc to extract technology, aid, credit, military supplies, etc, to further India's 'national development'. This national development trumpeted under the slogan of "import-substitution" consisted in restricting by *diktat* and high custom duties, western imports. These goods were produced within the country — **not independently**, but with the help of fourth-hand foreign technology, foreign credit with strings attached and foreign collaborations. Import-substitution was in fact a pseudo-nationalist slogan to hide the fact that imports of foreign consumer and intermediate goods **was substituted by the imports of foreign technology and credit to produce these goods in India**. The monopoly capitalist class however welcomed this economic nationalism, although it tied the country firmly to international capital. No more could it be taunted with Raj Kapoor's biting sarcasm: "*Mera joota hai Japani; Yeh patloon Englishthani, Sar pe lal topi Roosi; Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani.*" Now he could boast of manufacturing 'Indian' shoes, 'Indian' trousers and 'Indian' caps. Very few, least of all the *Hindutvawadis*, objected that he had already sold his Indian heart to imperialism.

But there was more to Nehruvian economic nationalism. The creation of the State bureaucratic class was also central to the 'Nehruvian vision' of managing and balancing the competition and contradictions among the rival monopoly houses and their foreign masters, and of undertaking the transformation of feudal agriculture into capitalist agriculture, in order to strengthen the base of capitalism in the countryside.

It was the State bureaucratic class that policed the Licence- Permit Raj so that the monopoly capitalists and the Indianised multinationals were assured of protected markets with monopoly profits. The Nehruites claimed that Licence Permit Raj ensured that "scarce national resources were not

frittered through over-production, competition and consumerism". The *Hindutvawadis* had to content themselves with pointing out how this system fettered the free Indian soul!

It was the State bureaucratic class which created and manned the giant public sector which provided subsidised inputs and cheap infrastructure for the capitalist class. The Nehruites declared the Bhakra Nangals to be the temples of modern India while the *Hindutvawadis* could do no more than conduct their RSS drills outside the temples of Hanuman!

Again, it was the State bureaucratic class which through 'land reforms', rural banking, cooperative movements, green revolution strategies, transformed India's feudal countryside into a capitalist countryside — a countryside dominated by rich farmers, consuming ever-increasing doses of seeds, fertilisers, irrigation and power. The Nehruites boasted that India became self-sufficient in foodgrains, although they carefully hid the fact that it was 'self-sufficient' only because 40 per cent of the population were perpetually semi-starved. However this did not affect the conscience of our *Hindutvawadis*, most of whom were big traders and hoarders. Instead they skillfully adjusted to this Nehruvian agrarian strategy by helping the landlords subvert land reforms, through getting them to donate their excess lands to temple trusts.

Under Indira Gandhi, Nehruvian nationalism was taken to its zenith. The State bureaucratic class reached the pinnacle of power. A mere telephone call from Udyog Bhavan could put the shivers into the most powerful captains of Indian industry. Meanwhile, under the slogan of decentralisation, the State bureaucratic class carved out a small-scale sector which not only created a class of petty entrepreneurs, but also provided a reservoir of **cheap labour for the big capitalists to sub-contract production**. Banks were nationalised and huge amounts of credit and write-offs were gifted to the monopoly capitalists and rich peasants. The *Hindutvawadis* were powerless to counteract this economic nationalism in the form of nationalisation. All they could do was to sing the virtues of

privatisation to a capitalist class which was supposed to have turned 'socialist'!

The world's largest democracy!

This brings us to the third component of Nehruvian nationalism — parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary democracy was required to ensure that the system of bureaucratic centralisation and controls led to the 'planned development' of the various exploiter classes and a balancing of their rival interests. Parliamentary democracy helped in managing and sorting out the contradictions of these exploiter sections, so that to a lesser or greater extent, **all these classes were accommodated and not hostile to State power.** It is ironical that the basis of this Parliamentary Democracy (*viz.* this system of bureaucratic controls) was the opposite of a people's democracy.

However, since parliamentary democracy is based on adult franchise, this franchise which consisted of the overwhelming majority of the poor and oppressed, had to be corrupted and subverted. Money-power provided by the big capitalists and muscle power provided by the henchmen of the landlords were liberally used by the Congress in every election.

In addition, the Congress Party's electoral strategy was based on cynically cultivating and exploiting caste and communal vote banks, while its leadership hypocritically mouthed 'secular and modern values'. The fundamentalists of **every** religion were provided State patronage to run schools, ashrams, charities, hospitals, thus helping them to exercise a vice-like grip over their communities. These fundamentalists could then be counted on to line up their vote-banks behind the Congress Party on election day.

At the same time, to prove its progressive credentials, half-hearted legislation was passed, restricting backward and reactionary social practices — but again only those connected to the Hindu religion. Sati, polygamy, untouchability, the devdasi system, etc. were banned on paper. As far as the Muslim community was concerned, the Congress Party turned a blind eye to similar backward customs and practices like polygamy, unilateral right of divorce, etc. under

the guise of protecting minority rights, thus earning the strong electoral support of the Muslim fundamentalists. The *Hindutvawadis* bitterly reacted against this 'discrimination'. "How dare a Muslim enjoy the right to keep four wives when a Hindu is denied this right in Hindustan" was the essence of their complaint. They conveniently chose to ignore the fact that backward Muslim practices were not an oppression on the Hindus but on the overwhelming mass of Muslim women themselves!

The important thing to understand is that this complaint of 'discrimination' could never become a potent electoral weapon against the Congress Party as long as the State bureaucratic class was in command of the system. How then was this command corroded? This is important to understand, because as this command corroded, Nehruvian nationalism was eroded and *Hindutva* nationalism appeared as an idea whose time had come.

Secessionist nationalisms!

The ability of the State bureaucratic class to harmonise the various pulls and pressures of the exploiter classes began to decline in the late 70s. The system of bureaucratic controls not only led to a centralisation of the economy but also to a centralisation of the polity. Every contradiction in the system was resolved by further bureaucratisation and further centralisation. The financial and bureaucratic powers of the centre grew gargantuan, while the states were reduced to mere appendages. The use of the military and C.R.P.F., as organs for repressing dissent, was institutionalised. MISA came on the statute books. The dismissal of state governments and governor's rule became routine. A party caucus replaced the party. India became Indira and Indira became India. The Emergency declared in 1975 was a reflection of this extreme bureaucratic centralisation of the economy and polity, a centralisation that had to temporarily suppress its own twin opposite — parliamentary democracy. Nehruvian nationalism was clearly on the defensive!

The first serious blow to Nehruvian nationalism, **which upheld India to be one nation**, was delivered by the secessionist movements in Punjab and Kashmir. Both move-

ments had the support of powerful regional interests which challenged the all-India hegemony of the State bureaucratic class. The Akali-Khalistani movement in Punjab whipped up Sikh nationalism while the Kashmir movement whipped up Kashmiri nationalism which later degenerated into a reactionary form of Muslim nationalism. Both movements were directed against the highly centralised and bureaucratised economy and polity presided over by the Congress(I). Both movements have had the support of Pakistan. Worse still, the factional struggles within the Congress Party, led powerful factions within the party to aid and abet both these movements to counter their rival factions.

Alternating doses of 'political solutions' and 'military solutions' administered by successive Congress governments have only marginalised the moderate leaderships of these movements and brought more rightist, more anti-Indian and fascist elements to the fore. This was the ideal setting for the *Hindutvawadis*. The failure of the Congress Party to contain these secessionist movements based on minority religious nationalisms, increased the appeal of the *Hindutvawadis*, who aggressively pushed forward *Hindutva* nationalism as the only solution to keep intact the unity and integrity of the country. Every bomb blast, every terrorist shooting of innocents, every terrorist crossing over from Pakistan to India, increased the appeal of *Hindutva* nationalism. The *Hindutvawadis* accused the Congress(I) of being impotent to protect the thousands of Hindus who have been forced to migrate from Kashmir. They accused the Congress of pampering the Kashmiri Muslims by upholding Article 370 of the Constitution. They demanded martial law in Kashmir without political interference. They unleashed a frenzied campaign against Pakistan, which was arming and training Khalistanis in Punjab and Muslim militants in Kashmir. The *Ekta Yatra* led by Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi to unfurl the national flag in Srinagar on January 26, 1992, was a symbolic movement to prove to the country that only the BJP with its unabashed *Hindutva* nationalism could protect the honour of the national flag and defend the unity and integrity of the country. The slogan "Unity and Integrity

of India", coined by the Congress Party in 1984 was now being hijacked by the *Hindutvawadis*!

Turning into its opposite

The second serious blow to Nehruvian nationalism was ironically delivered by the Congress Party itself. It was delivered by Rajiv Gandhi's liberalisation programme which attempted to loosen the system of bureaucratic controls and Licence-Permit Raj. **The hegemony of the State bureaucratic class over the economy and polity was the foundation of Nehruvian nationalism and Rajiv's liberalisation programme began undermining this control.**

This control had to be undermined because by the '80s, the State bureaucratic class had turned into its opposite. From a class harmonising and balancing rival exploiter classes, it was transformed into a class dominating and lording over all classes. From a class whose role was to resolve contradictions, it itself became the biggest contradiction for every other exploiter class in Indian society. From a class which was the engine of capitalist development, it turned into its fetter! If formerly it attempted to use its position to bargain the best terms of trade from rival imperialist blocs, now it began to bargain for the highest commissions, bribes and kickbacks for itself and its political masters. If formerly it extracted its pound of flesh for licenses, permits, favours and contracts, now it would extract from all the bidders and yet deliver to none. Delays, procrastinations, internal sabotage, groupism and rivalries became institutionalised in the State machinery. It was not long before the monopoly capitalist class as a whole began reacting against this monstrous cancer which stifled its development. Rajiv Gandhi, eager to distance himself from the stink of the bureaucratic system and carve out a modern identity for himself, made a virtue out of necessity. Liberalisation and modernisation became his mottos. Overnight the orphaned prime minister was adopted by the monopoly capitalist class!

There were four important fall-outs from Rajiv's liberalisation drive and all created the grounds for the disintegration of Nehruvian nationalism and the rise of the *Hindutva* brigade.

The first fall-out

The first fall-out was that the liberalisation process, by loosening the Licence-Permit Raj, unleashed the most ferocious competition between different sections of the monopoly capitalists and their foreign collaborators. An all-out war, above all to control the State machinery, for the manipulation of import-export policies, customs and excise duties and State largesse, became vital to finish off rivals. Some years back the rivalry between the monopoly capitalists led by Ambani of Reliance and Nusli Wadia of Bombay Dyeing had become so fierce in the petrochemical industry that an attempt was made to assassinate Nusli Wadia.

One outcome of the rivalry between the monopolists was that a powerful section among them began lining up behind the BJP and Janata Dal during the 1989 elections. The inherent instability of the Janata experiment part II, the Pandora's box which Mandal opened up, along with the extreme factional fights of its leadership, soon lost for it any support it enjoyed from the monopoly capitalists. When the 1991 Lok Sabha elections were announced, this powerful class was divided between the Congress Party and the BJP. The Hinduja, the Ambanis, the Singhanias, the Dalmias pumped crores of rupees into the coffers of the BJP, making the Congress look poor in comparison. The BJP had graduated from a party of traders and former feudalists (Bania-Brahmin party) to voice the interests of the most reactionary sections of monopoly capital!

The second fall-out

The second fall-out of Rajiv's liberalisation programme was the rapid growth of a **lumpen bourgeoisie** in India. Builders breaking FSI, development control rules and municipal regulations; criminals-turned-politicians like Pappu Kalani and Hitendra Thakur, grabbing government land and running extortion rackets; underworld dons like Dawood Ibrahim pulling the strings from far away Dubai; commission agents like Win Chadha striding down the corridors of power; havala racketeers, smugglers, drug pushers, property speculators, gangsters, fixers, shoving India into the '21st century.'

As long as the State bureaucratic class had hegemony over the economy and polity, this lumpen bourgeoisie was kept under a tight leash. Thus far and no further. Liberalisation made life liberal for this breed. However, gang wars and street corner bars, blue films and 3-star prostitute dens, drug pedlars and the spread of AIDS, simultaneously increased the appeal of the disciplined and cadre-based RSS as an alternative, especially as many of its cadres are still imbued with the best of feudal virtues like obedience, honour, reverence for elders, personal integrity and honesty.

The *Hindutva* brigade has fully exploited the growth of this lumpen bourgeoisie in order to hard-sell its *Hindutva* nationalism. It has used the growth of this cancer to not only expose the Congress-lumpen nexus but also to generate anti-Muslim hysteria, as a sizable section of lumpens are unemployed Muslim youth. Simultaneously these Chanakyans have themselves begun organising lumpens filled with anti-Muslim hatred under fronts like the Bajrang Dal, etc. However, the Sangh Parivar's propaganda skills have overnight converted these saffron-shirts into patriots singing Vande Mataram!

The third fall-out

The third fall-out of liberalisation was the creation of a burgeoning middle class, fattened by the rapid expansion of the stock market and the real estate racket. Every possible suppressed whim and fancy of this class for foreign goods was satisfied during Rajiv's Raj. Colour TVs, videos, cars, motorcycles, cellular phones, computers, sanitary fittings under different brand names and colours, flooded the market heralding the age of designer bathrooms, designer clothes, designer culture and even designer condoms.

But how could the young Rajiv turn Santa Claus at 40? Simple, Rajivomics! **He replaced the import-substitution policy which was the hallmark of Nehruvian economic nationalism by import-dependent growth.** To finance this bonanza, India's entire foreign exchange reserves were blown up within 5 years and the foreign debt reached astronomical levels.

But the most ironic development has been that a sizable section of this yuppy class, with its contempt for the toiling masses, has become a base for *Hindutva* nationalism and fascism. During the last Lok Sabha elections, a sizable section of Rajiv's yuppies turned into SCUPPIES (Saffron Clad Yuppies).

This switchover is not difficult to understand. The more the yuppy possesses, the more insecure he feels. His job and petty businesses are insecure, the value of his shares are insecure, the whole country is insecure. He imagines Bangladeshis taking over his cities and Muslims breeding like rabbits to make him a minority in Hindustan. Worst of all, his social fabric is under strain. While he wants to savour all the goodies of the west, he hypocritically shies away from the 'Western Culture' that comes along with these goodies. He wants 5 channel colour TV and yet expects his children to maintain traditional forms of dress and behaviour after watching Tina Turner on MTV. He is therefore fatally attracted to *Hindutva* nationalism which promises to teach those "Miyas" a lesson and create a Hindustan with large doses of religion and tradition mixed with progress, stability and discipline.

The fourth fall-out

The fourth fall-out of Rajiv's liberalisation programme was that it not only created an economic base for *Hindutva*, but also increased the **political** space of the Muslim fundamentalists and the *Hindutvawadis* within the system. Every step which loosened the system of bureaucratised and centralised controls increased the political space of the fundamentalists.

The Congress(I) could earlier practice its brand of bourgeois, half-hearted secularism, of providing "equal State support to all religions", because the State bureaucratic class enabled this tight-rope walking between different communal fundamentalists. Through its hegemony over the system, the State bureaucratic class could control the aggressive politics of rival fundamentalists. **It could ensure that at no time the fundamentalists determined the political agenda of the day.**

Rajiv's liberalisation let loose the fascist monsters which were bottled within the system of centralised and bureaucratic controls. Not only did their 'religious, charitable and educational' trusts collect hundreds of crores of rupees from their Indian and foreign patrons, but their front organisations became assertive in politics.

In 1986, when the Supreme Court granted a measly sum as maintenance to Shah Bano, the Muslim fundamentalists mobilised the Muslim masses on the streets against the judgement on the slogan that "Islam is in danger." In the heyday of the State bureaucratic class, no fundamentalist organisation could dare challenge the writ of the highest judicial organ of the State bureaucratic machinery. Now they were proclaiming that the courts had no right to decide on matters of religious practice. The Congress(I)'s capitulation to the Muslim fundamentalists in the Shah Bano case exposed what lay hidden under the shell of liberalisation, *viz.* religious bigotry and fundamentalist reaction.

The capitulation in the Shah Bano case was a golden opportunity for the *Hindutvawadis*. Now it was their turn. They lost no time in heating up the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid movement and engulfed the whole country in fire!

It is now common history how the Congress Party itself aided and abetted this movement for electoral gain. However, what is important to understand is how the *Hindutvawadis* skillfully used this movement to deal the most deadly blows against Nehruvian secularism. Rajiv's capitulation in the Shah Bano case was connected to the capitulation of the Congress Party to the Muslim League in 1947 and the break-up of the country. The *Hindutvawadis* accused the Congress Party from Nehru onwards of pampering the Muslims and using them as a vote bank. They accused the Congress of interfering with the Hindu religion while allowing Muslims to maintain their own personal laws. In short, they mocked at Nehruvian nationalism which was supposedly based on 'pampering the minorities' and 'discriminating against the Hindus', who constitute the majority. However, more deadly was their success in fanaticising huge sections of Hindus against not just Muslims, **but also**

against all the Centrist and Left parties who opposed the demolition of the Babri Masjid. All these parties were dubbed 'pseudo-secular' and anti-Hindu.

They militantly counterposed *Hindutva* nationalism to Nehruvian nationalism. They accused Nehruvian nationalism of being the source of all evils within the system and boasted that only *Hindutva* nationalism could solve all the ills of this society. With the help of such an aggressive campaign, the BJP increased its seats in Parliament from a mere 2 in 1984 to 119 in 1991 — the largest opposition group. In addition, it captured four state governments. The *Hindutvawadis* were in a position to set the political agenda of the day!

From liberalisation to fascisation!

While the *Hindutvawadis* have been setting the political agenda of the day, what has been taking place in the liberalised economy? The liberalised economy has been lurching from crisis to crisis. The cruel logic of import-dependent liberalisation, financed through mind boggling foreign loans, reached a crunch in 1991 with the Balance of Payments Crisis. When the Congress Party formed a minority government in 1991, the foreign exchange treasury was nearly empty, making it impossible to pay for further imports and to service the huge foreign debt which requires ever greater sums of foreign exchange. By 1991, the foreign debt weighing on the backs of the people had reached about Rs. 1.80 lakh crores and debt servicing that year was Rs. 15,340 crores. There was no foreign exchange to service this debt. The Indian government was on the verge of defaulting on debt repayment. For the ruling classes, this would have been worse than even a hundred Bhopal gas tragedies. Another foreign loan was therefore necessary to avoid at all costs the default. This time the Congress Party literally crawled to the IMF for a loan, which has imposed conditionalities that completely destroy the power of the State bureaucratic class to balance out rival exploiter interests. If Rajiv began the process of partial liberalisation, the Rao government's New Economic Policy aims towards not only completing this

process, but also fully opening up the Indian economy to international capital (globalisation).

IMF conditionalities have brought about a total change in the structure of the Indian economy. The Nehruvian import-substitution growth has been given a hasty burial and import-dependent growth has been declared the magic wand to convert India into another Asian tiger. Export or perish, has been made a key slogan to supposedly finance this import-dependent growth. Licence- Permit Raj has been completely dismantled and replaced by liberalisation and free competition. Restriction on the entry of foreign capital has been replaced by the most unashamed wooing of foreign capital and foreign collaborations. Customs duties have been lowered to encourage imports. On the other hand, a non-convertible rupee has not only been devalued but made convertible to aid exports. Subsidies to agriculture have been slashed. The public sector has been ordered to compete with international capital or close down shop. An exit policy which gives foreign and monopoly capital the right to close down their operations and throw thousands of workers on the streets, is being finalised. However, more shocking than this economic about-turn has been **the political fact that this policy is being implemented by a minority government.** Is there anything more revealing about the role of the opposition, than this?

The implications

What are the implications of this complete restructuring of the Indian economy?

Firstly, the most vicious life and death competition has been unleashed between different sections of monopoly capital. A frenzied race has begun among them to woo foreign multinationals and tie-up with them, just in order to survive. Recently TOMCO merged with Hindustan Lever while Godrej tied up with Procter and Gamble. These mergers are supposed to help them capture export markets. In actual practice they will land up competing for the restricted and saturated Indian market. Thus the competition is getting fiercer, the competitors clashing are getting bigger. The race to control the State machinery is becoming deadlier.

Secondly, the fiercer the competition between the monopoly capitalists, the more vicious the attacks on the organised working class. Lay-offs, retrenchments, closures, mergers, increased work pressures, etc., are becoming the orders of the day.

Thirdly, a sizable section of the middle and rich peasantry are revolting not only at the higher prices of fertilisers, power, pesticides, but at the total penetration of foreign multinationals in agriculture, especially in the seeds and pesticides industry. Already the peasantry is up in arms against the Dunkel proposals.

Fourthly, thousands of small industries and cottage industries are going to collapse as the big fish enter their waters. Recently the Congress government gave Cargill, an American company 15,000 acres of land in Gujarat for salt panning. Thousands of households and small manufacturers who depend on this cottage industry will be ruined.

Fifthly, the structural transformation of the economy will exacerbate the already unequal development between different regions and states of the country. The IMF's conditionality of curbing deficit financing and reduction of taxes on consumer goodies will further erode the financial base of the states. The contradictions between the centre and the states, between the states themselves, and between the states and their backward regions, will intensify.

Sixthly, import-dependent growth and the continuous debt repayment will increase the pressure on scarce foreign exchange. The demand for foreign exchange will constantly outstrip supply, because India's exports will not be able to make a dent in the highly competitive and protectionist markets of the west. This will constantly devalue the rupee, fuelling runaway inflation.

Seventhly and most importantly, with the NEP breaking decisively the hegemony of the State bureaucratic class over the economy and polity, this class has lost its overall unity and is itself splitting and polarising, as one section undermines another section, a third section breaks the back of a fourth. Every top official of the State is being pushed into taking one side or another in the contradictions and rivalries

unleashed by the new policies. This same class which unitedly stood behind the Congress(I) and was the bastion of Nehruvian nationalism is now **divided among rival political masters**. A sizable section is going with the BJP as the *Hindutvawadis* have staked their claim to power in Delhi.

From democracy to fascism!

Thus the complete restructuring of the Indian economy is inexorably moving towards unleashing the most brutal hardships and attacks on the toiling masses. It is moving towards drastically affecting powerful sections of the exploiter classes — from the monopoly capitalists to the rich peasantry. It is moving towards creating antagonistic contradictions, irresolvable rivalries and uncontrollable opposition.

It is in such a situation that parliamentary democracy, the right to vote, the right to organise, the right to protest, a free press, etc., such as they are today, has **become a burden** for the most reactionary sections of the exploiter classes linked to imperialism.

Under Nehruvian economic nationalism, the State bureaucratic class ensured a tight control over the economic development of every single class in society. Parliamentary democracy ensured that contradictions turned into consensus and consent. Will parliamentary democracy survive in India with the NEP breaking decisively the hegemony of the State bureaucratic class and letting loose a pandora's box of contradictions and conflicts? Will it be possible to ensure 'political stability' through parliamentary democracy, in the midst of bankruptcies, runaway inflation, stock-market crashes and an angry working class and peasantry?

It is here that *Hindutva* nationalism has a recipe to 'save the nation' — FASCISM. The *Hindutvawadis* are not just interested in coming to power. They are committed **to changing the nature of State power itself**. Through the Ram Janmabhoomi movement they have fanaticised large masses of Hindus against the Muslims, against secular Hindus and against all the Centrist and Left parties — thus creating a base of support for fascist rule. And this is just the beginning. "*Kashi-Mathura baki hai*." (Kashi and

Mathura still remain). They have created armed lumpen stormtroopers who have mercilessly attacked their political opponents including those in the press. They boast of a monolithic cadre-based organisation to usher in 'political stability' in comparison to the faction-ridden Congress Party. The contempt with which they have trampled on the Constitution of India shows that they are not going to allow liberal bourgeois concepts of law and justice to deter them from their goals.

Economic nationalism and fascism

But once again it would be a grave mistake to underestimate how the *Hindutvawadis* are capable of unleashing the power of economic nationalism to win for themselves a base of support. In a situation of dog-eat-dog, a section of *Hindutvawadis* have begun to fraudulently put forward the slogan of "Swadeshi." This section has begun castigating the government for "its open door policy to multinationals which has mortgaged the economic sovereignty of India". They are opposing Narasimha Rao's globalisation programme "which has thrown open Indian industry to unfair international competition." They are advocating "globalisation at India's own pace to serve her own needs." In short they are calling for selective globalisation to woo all those **adversely affected** by the Rao government's open door globalisation.

Thus when the inheritors of Nehruvian nationalism have opened up the Indian economy to all-round foreign penetration, this section of *Hindutvawadis* are putting forward a programme of economic nationalism with restrictions on globalisation. And here is where the whole problem lies. Selective globalisation would concretely mean the State machinery taking sides in the intense rivalry between monopoly capital. It would mean using the power of the State to support one section of monopoly and foreign capital against another. Can this be possible without suppressing parliamentary democracy as we know it today? Can this be possible without suppressing dissent?

One thing is certain. India is in the throes of a cataclysmic transition. A great churning has begun in every class and community of our society. In the intense struggle be-

tween Nehruvianism and *Hindutva* nationalism, the grounds are being created **for a third force to arise**. This force exists in an embryonic state, but it exists nonetheless. And the most important thing is, **it is growing**. The contours of this force have not crystallised, but they are crystallising. All that can be said about it is that this force will necessarily have to be based on consistent anti-imperialism and revolutionary democracy. It will have to be this, in order to sharply differentiate itself from both Nehruvianism which is a dying force and *Hindutva* nationalism which is the rising force.

Already the NEP has made the anti-imperialist struggle not merely a question of debate but a matter of survival for the working and toiling masses. The foreign debt is becoming so monstrously huge, that its servicing can only be done, by literally sucking out the blood of the Indian people. Each and every traitorous economic policy of this government from import-dependent growth to export-dependent survival has its source in the exigency of debt repayment. **It is a question of time before debt cancellation becomes the central slogan of the anti-imperialist movement.**

Since the emerging fascist State will forcibly keep the country within the chains of imperialist capital — the anti-imperialist struggle will also be a struggle for revolutionary democracy. The struggle for debt cancellation can become a potent weapon to expose the fraudulence of *Hindutva* nationalism and patriotism.

It is now becoming clearer to many that *Hindutva* fascism cannot be defeated by "redefining secularism" or going back to the Nehruvian era which has passed into history. It can only be defeated by going forward. Forward through the anti-imperialist struggle. Forward through the people's democratic revolution.



Ram Janmabhoomi- Babri Masjid dispute — “Religion in danger”?

AYODHYA — the land without war — will go down in history as the place where the most important battle in the history of modern India is being fought. The struggle is not over a masjid or temple but between two ideologies — Nehruvianism and Hindutvawad, a struggle between two political systems — parliamentary democracy and fascism. And yet the two sides have never been irreconcilable opponents. In fact Nehruvianism has paved the way for Hindutvawad. The article below by Masooma Rana lvi, published in November 1988, exposes how the Congress Party, the chief proponent of Nehruvianism, helped the proponents of Hindutvawad to convert the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue into the most explosive national question of the decade.

UTTAR PRADESH witnessed yet another bloody massacre as communal riots flared up in Muzaffarnagar, Khatauli, Aligarh and Faizabad during October 1988. The month-long riots tore asunder the peace and harmony of this region. And while the rest of the country celebrated Dassera and Id-i-Milad, the festivals of joy, love and happiness, the toiling masses of UP suffered death, destruction and darkness.

The recent round of violence started with the Babri Masjid Coordination Committee (BMCC) giving a call for a march on October 14, 1988, to Ayodhya to offer prayers en masse at the disputed Babri Masjid. Public meetings with fiery and emotional communal speeches to arouse Muslims to defend their religion, were part of their mobilisation campaign. The clichéd battle cry of "Islam in danger" was sounded. The Hindu fundamentalists running true to form, reciprocated this militant mood of their Muslim counterparts. Their Bajrang Dal and Hindu Sena volunteers armed with trishuls were ready to defend the Ram Janmabhoomi. Posters were pasted all over India saying that the Hindus would stop the Muslim marchers in their mohallas itself. While both sides were getting ready for a showdown, the government was doing its *kumbhakarna* act, viz. pretending to be in deep slumber.

As October 14 approached, the tension mounted and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an extreme right-wing militant front organisation of the RSS, fired off the first volley by declaring a bandh in protest against the march. This spark was enough ammunition for the trouble-makers to start fomenting communal tension. Forcible closing of shops, stabbings, looting, arson, brickbatting, and gruesome acts of violence and destruction marked the bandh. The district authorities, despite knowing full well the potential dangers, kept far away from the scene of violence on the bandh day. Apparently, they were 'busy' with the farewell celebrations of the district magistrate who was retiring!

The bandh was merely a precursor to the frenzy of violence that was to follow. Two days later, Muzaffarnagar and Faizabad were gutted by the vicious flames of communal fires. The bloody carnage left behind 21 dead, a trail of wail-

ing widows, destitute children, broken homes and deserted streets. The callous negligence of the district authorities in curbing the violence had the blessings of one of UP's senior Congress(I) ministers, Hukum Singh, Minister for food and civil supplies, who saw the riots as a means to get even with his Muslim rival, Said-Uz Aman, home minister. Today as an eerie graveyard-like silence prevails in the riot-torn areas, the government shamelessly claims "everything has returned to normal."

The culprits behind the scene

The riots that shattered UP were no sudden surprise. They were the outcome of a two-year-old feud which was created by the fiendish machinations of the Congress government which provided equal patronage and support to communalists of both religions. The gory history of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute is a shameless testimony to this.

The dispute started way back in 1948 with the discovery of an idol of Lord Ram in the innermost chambers of Ayodhya's Babri Masjid. The matter was taken to court, in order to determine the title of the land. The court confiscated the property and appointed a government receiver. Later the district collector locked the property as it was felt that the issue would lead to disharmony and tension. As years passed by, the dispute was soon forgotten. The locks bound people into communal harmony. But apparently this harmony and peace was getting too uncomfortable for the government. So it decided to open the communal sore which had nearly healed. The machinations began when *Uttar Pradesh*, the Hindi organ of the UP government's information department, published in its April 1984 issue the following communal and distorted version of history.

"Taking advantage of our social divisions the Muslim invaders spread all over the country. Temples were destroyed, idols broken. For religious conversion Muslim rulers and Muslims launched a policy of terrorism and temptation" (pg. 21). Elsewhere, "In the beginning of the medieval period under Muslim rulers, it (Ayodhya) again achieved political importance as a provincial capital. Amongst the early Mus-

lim invaders Ghazi Mian destroyed Kanak Bhavan. As Shivastva rulers of Ayodhya were still strong, he could not dare to do more" (pg. 27). And, "In 1528 Babar came here (Ayodhya) and stayed for a week. He got Janmasthan demolished and got a mosque constructed in his own name at the same site from the material of the demolished temple. Many of the columns are still in good condition."

The aim of the government in publishing such a piece is naturally suspect. Surely the government did not wish to give the people a lesson in history through such an obviously distorted and communal presentation of unproven 'facts' in such a sensitive and controversial matter. **Did the government want the crimes committed hundreds and thousands of years ago by invaders and plunderers to be avenged by making the innocent masses of today the sacrificial victims?** So it would appear. Because this very propaganda of the UP government was used by the Hindu fundamentalists as the ideological basis to demand that the Babri mosque be converted into the Ram Janmabhoomi temple.

Within a few months of the *Uttar Pradesh* publication, the VHP formed the Dharma Mukti Yagna Samiti, which pledged to "liberate" about 450 mosques and convert them into temples. The communal poison being injected into the masses was the same that appeared in the government publication, namely that these structures were originally temples which the Muslim rulers had destroyed and had mosques built in their place. Ayodhya was chosen as the test case and the Ram Janmabhoomi Action Committee (RJAC) was formed.

In October 1984, the RJAC launched a vicious *tala kholo* (open the locks) agitation. *Rath yatras* were organised throughout UP to spread the communal virus. The government did nothing to stop this. In reaction to the whiplash of the Hindu fundamentalists, the Muslim fundamentalists formed the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) to whip up hysteria amongst the Muslim masses. It was in such a volatile situation that the government turned a blind eye to the machiavellian appeal filed by a local advocate, Pandey, before the district magistrate of Faizabad, petitioning that

the locks of the disputed temple/mosque be opened. The judge immediately complied and the floodgates that unleashed the most insane communal frenzy were swung open. The Rip Van Winkle of the Indian judiciary system which had slept for 38 long years, overnight decided to pass the order, knowing fully well the vitiated atmosphere prevailing in the country.

Government wears blinkers

Bir Bahadur Singh, the then chief minister of UP, wasted no time in implementing the Faizabad magistrate's explosive order. Within a record time of 19 minutes the locks were broken and the order effected. The 'secular' Congress government and its 'secular' Doordarshan gave full TV coverage to the religious fervour released amongst the Hindus by the reopening of the doors of the Ram Janmabhoomi. *Rath yatras* and victory processions were allowed to wind their way through the major cities of India.

Once again the government's own machinery gave the communalists every form of support to blow the issue up into national proportions. Encouraged by the government's green signal, the fundamentalists promptly started setting up their front organisations and *shakhas*. While the Hindu fundamentalists formed their Hindu Senas and Bajrang Dals, the Muslim fundamentalists saw a welcome opportunity to consolidate their hold over their people and lost no time in setting up their Adam Senas and Ali Senas. The 'secular' Congress Party was playing its role by shamelessly fomenting trouble **on both sides of the communal divide**. This is evident from the fact that the president of the VHP, Shiv Nath Katju, is in the Congress(I), an ex-judge of the Allahabad high court, an ex-member of the Uttar Pradesh legislative council and the son of a former defence minister. The general secretary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti, floated by the VHP is Daudayal Khanna, a former Uttar Pradesh minister and Congress member. On the other side, Maulana Hussain Kachauchi, a former Congress MP, has been the chairman of the Uttar Pradesh BMAC. Besides these, there have been scores of other less

prominent Congress(I) leaders in both camps, plotting and counter-plotting.

The role of the opposition parties in stoking the communal fires was no less vicious. The Janata Party general secretary participated in the BMAC's Boat Club rally, while of course Janata Party leader and MP, Syed Shahabuddin is one of the heroes of the show. Lok Dal(B) MLA, Azam Khan, had been responsible for inflammatory speeches at meetings organised by the BMAC, while Vijaya Raje Scindia, Gwalior's ex-Rajmata and vice-president of the BJP, called upon the Hindus at the Ayodhya rally to shed the last drop of their blood to protect the birthplace of Lord Ram.

Who shares the cake?

What was expected happened! Barely three months after the locks were opened, the communal time-bomb started exploding. One city after another, one district after another were burnt down in the flames of communal violence. In all these clashes, it was the local exploiters who instigated the riots for economic ends. For example, the Barabanki riots in May 1986 were engineered by opium smugglers in order to embarrass the district magistrate and superintendent of police who had been leading a crackdown against them. The outcome was that the government immediately obliged the racketeers by transferring the officials. In the May 1987 Meerut riots, traders hired hoodlums of both communities to destroy shops and businesses belonging to rivals, under the pretext of communal riots. In the Aligarh riots, the issue at stake was land. The Muslim squatters in the heartland of the city were ruthlessly evicted in the guise of riots and their homes burnt. While the Hindu and Muslim poor and hardworking masses have been shattered by these communal outbursts, the communal senas financed by the zamindars, traders, former rajas and nawabs and comprising of anti-social elements and frustrated unemployed youth, have had a field day in looting and plundering. As each bloody carnage leaves behind numbed masses, gripped with fear and helplessness, the respective fundamentalists **cra-**
ftily use this fear to consolidate and strengthen their
pernicious hold over the masses.

Using the insecurity and fear of riots, the fundamentalists of both sides in the name of religion, have built their economic fortunes. This can be clearly seen in the present controversy. In 1984, the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Samiti set up the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas, a trust, which according to the secretary of the VHP will build a temple on the disputed site at an estimated cost of Rs. 25 crores. He also claimed that industrialists had promised to donate Rs. 50 crores to this trust. This is no empty boast keeping in mind the constant support received by the VHP from industrialists like the Singhanias and the Dalmias. Besides, the bastion of feudalism and reaction, the various former rajas and maharajas who still continue to live in the lap of luxury in their palaces, have extended all their support to trusts of this kind. For instance, Dr. Karan Singh of Kashmir and Vijaye Raje Scindia are both playing pivotal roles in aggravating this dispute. Money is being extracted from the masses as can be seen by the statement of B.L. Sharma, an office-bearer of the VHP, that a rupee would be collected from every Hindu in the country in order to "liberate" the Ram Janmabhoomi. Further, during the *rath yatras* in 1987, a sum of Rs. 3 crores was collected in UP alone.

The Muslim fundamentalists are not far behind. Their trusts are filled with petro-dollars pumped in by the reactionary regimes of the Gulf under the pretext of setting up *Madrassas* and *Majlises*. All this wealth collected in the name of religion is then used to finance vicious communal propaganda, public meetings, and rallies, *rath yatras* and marches, offices of communal organisations and the guns and bombs used during riots.

These trusts, set up for "charitable, religious and educational purposes", **are registered by the government and provided state patronage and additional benefits.** The big business tycoons, traders and industrialists, who control most of these trusts, use them as channels to convert their black money into white, while in addition they secure tax exemptions on their donations. These trusts also control thousands of acres of prime land in the name of religion and charity but actually use it for commercial purposes. Some reports have indicated that the disputed property in

Ayodhya covers a massive plot of 1,500 acres of rich orchard land. Naturally the price of land being what it is, the communal leaders of both sides have their eyes on this delight.

Divide and rule

The government's criminal inaction and backing to the communalists has made very clear its intentions to divide and rule. The British maxim has been well-mastered by the Indian rulers. Today, as the monsters of unemployment, hunger, poverty and inflation grind down the working people, the communalists are a handy instrument to divert the attention of the people from their daily oppressions and to maintain a subjugated and subservient populace. UP because of its sheer size, is important for any government to rule, since nearly 86 seats in the Lok Sabha are from this state. By stoking communal passions on both sides first, and then appearing as the neutral judge, the Congress Party seeks to manipulate votes. In the Shah Bano case, the government capitulated to the Muslim fundamentalists by passing a reactionary law. This, so that they will deliver the Muslim votes. On the other hand, to show the Hindu fundamentalists that the government does not bow only to Muslim fundamentalism, the locks at Ayodhya were opened. This is the real meaning of the Congress's brand of "secularism"!

Can we expect the hand that lit the communal fire to extinguish it? No. All the moves to settle the dispute are mere attempts to douse the communal fire with more fuel. The government has set up several committees since May 1987 to settle the issue 'amicably'. One may have thought that these committees would consist of secular leaders working towards a solution. But nothing is further from the truth. For these committees consist of communal leaders of both communities, brought together by 'secular' Congressmen.

The committees, according to the government, are supposed to find an "acceptable" solution to the dispute. A solution acceptable to whom, may we ask? To the fundamentalists of both communities! The **same leaders** who have aroused the basest and vilest emotions among people and helped the crooks to loot, kill, rape and burn are now asked

to don the mask of peacemakers. Can there be a more fiendish solution to the problem?

The other solution propagated by the same people is equally fraudulent. The home secretary has said, "It was a court decision and we will let the issue be sorted out by the judiciary." The Home Minister, Buta Singh also sings praises of the judicial process as a solution. But behind this fondness for the judicial process lies a cruel deception. This can be seen from the fact that despite the BMAC having filed a writ petition in the Allahabad high court challenging the Faizabad judgment in February 1987, the state government had not filed its own reply for 15 long months. Why this delay by those who claim to have faith in the judicial process? Further, the title suit filed 40 years ago has still not been settled. Only the naive can hope that the government is genuinely interested in settling the dispute.

Conclusion

The minimum requirements of any secular government is to maintain communal peace and harmony and to put down with a heavy hand any form of communal propaganda and violence. Forty years ago in the interest of communal harmony the government had locked the disputed property. Today even this minimum commitment has been thrown to the winds. The criminal actions of the government and the communalists have converted even places of worship and devotion into dens of violence and hatred. Is this what any religion ever preaches?

The holy place at Ayodhya has been tainted with the blood of thousands of innocent victims of communal hatred, its walls echo the cries of destitute widows and children. And what is horrifying is that this will continue to remain so, as long as sacred places are converted into property feuds between rival communalists. Therefore, progressive people should demand that the disputed property at Ayodhya be sealed off completely until such a time as people of both communities can worship there without any fear or hatred.

Ram's name but Babar's game!

THE Ram Janmabhoomi question has been central to the game plan of the Hindutvawadis. It has enabled the RSS-BJP-VHP to cynically use the revered name of Shri Ram to mobilise Hindus on a gigantic scale. It has helped this combine to polarise the population on communal lines and to fanaticise a section of Hindus against Muslims. But most important, this question has enabled the combine to consolidate a strong Hindu vote bank against the centrist parties and the Parliamentary Left. Therefore, answering the various arguments put forward by the RSS-BJP-VHP regarding the Ram Janmabhoomi question has become very important for the anti-fascist movement. This is what this editorial, written in November 1989, attempted to do.

COMMUNAL forces are all set to burn Ayodhya, and the rest of India, in communal fire. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is spreading the communal fire in more than five lakh places in India, where bricks are being worshipped to be taken to Ayodhya to build a Ram Mandir in the place of the present Babri Masjid. Ever since the VHP took up this issue, bloody riots have taken place in our country, claiming human lives, destroying houses and homes, and tearing apart the social fabric.

The people of Ayodhya are opposed to this bloodshed. They have lived and want to live in peace and harmony. Their feelings are expressed by Swami Lal Das, the present priest at the disputed shrine: "The people are now realising that **outsiders are creating trouble here**. No one here wants any bloodshed." (emphasis ours). Local people have organised to assert, "*Pahale hamein shanti chahiye, mandir masjid baad mein*". (First we want peace, later the temple or mosque.)

The people who truly want to worship Ram or Allah, left to themselves, would together find a way to settle the dispute. One such agreement was arrived at as far back as a century ago when the people of both communities worshipped at the disputed site. But today, Hindu and Muslim communalists, who claim to represent their respective communities, nay, claim to have sole monopoly to decide for their community, are the ones who are deliberately avoiding a settlement. The parliamentary representatives of the communalists of both religions have pretended to be very reasonable in Parliament. However, these same parliamentary leaders have sent their own henchmen into bastis and mohallas to abuse the other community, preach that (communal) violence is the only way to solve the 'crisis' and instigate communal riots. In a word, to make the dispute more and more vicious.

And now the VHP leaders have openly declared that **they would use brute force to get their way**. Their gruesome plans for the future are apparent from the slogan given in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's organ *Panchajanya*: "*Usko kaun bachaye, jiska wadh karne Bhagwan chale*" (Who can save those whom God himself has set out to kill.)

It is not a question of merely one shrine in Ayodhya. The VHP has named hundreds of other masjids which it is going to subsequently 'liberate' — obviously using brute force. With the Babri Masjid 'reconstruction' programme, it is only laying the foundations of its further diabolic plans.

It is therefore extremely important to understand where this dangerous path of using force to "settle" disputes concerning faith and worship will take our country. A path propagated by the RSS through its various front organisations like the VHP and the BJP.

Let us scrutinise their arguments :

Only one Ram Janmabhoomi?

They say that Muslims can have their masjid anywhere else, but for the Hindus, there is only one Ram Janmabhoomi.

But is it true that the Hindus unanimously agree that there is only one Ram Janmabhoomi, that Shri Ram was born **exactly** at the spot where the Babri Masjid stands today?

The Ramayan by Maharishi Valmiki does not say where Ram was born. Another book in Sanskrit, *Ayodhya Mahatma*, says that Shri Ram was born in Kaushalya Bhavan. The Kaushalya Bhavan still stands at a distance from the disputed site. The Dashrath Mahal also stands nearby. Some people ask: Could Lord Ram, son of the mighty king Dashrath, have been born outside his father's or mother's palace?

But most important, a temple called Ram Janmasthan Mandir which stands a few hundred yards away from the Babri Masjid, is known by locals as the birthplace of Ram! If the Babri Masjid site is the birthplace of Shri Ram, then why is this other temple venerated by thousands of Hindus as the Ram Janmasthan Mandir? Does the VHP have an answer to this question?

The VHP claims are not restricted to the Babri Masjid alone. Almost every single monument in the world is claimed to be a Hindu mandir. *Vishwa Hindu*, the VHP journal claims that Taj Mahal is *Tejo Mahalaya* — a Shiva temple. Jerusalem is *Yedushalyam* or "the shrine of the Lord of Yadus, i.e. Krishna, St. Paul's Cathedral in London is

originally "Gopal (Krishna) Mandir", the Kaaba in Mecca was "a gigantic Vishnu temple", Paris was *Parmeshwarium*, etc., etc. And everybody in the world is supposed to accept this unquestioningly because it is the VHP's faith! What does the VHP take the people to be — babies in cradles who would listen to any old nanny's tale? Is it not a deliberate and malicious attempt to fool Hindus and to hurt the religious sentiments of non-Hindus?

Why did Muslim rulers destroy temples?

The VHP instigates Hindus by charging that Muslim rulers tried to force Islam on Hindus and demolished temples as part of their religious oppressions. Yes, Muslim rulers did destroy temples. But what the VHP deliberately hides is that the main motive behind the destruction was not religion but plunder. **And that such plunder was carried out not only by Muslim rulers, but even Hindu rulers who looted their own Gods.** E.g. Prof. Harbans Mukhia tells us, ".....many Hindu rulers also did the same (demolish) with temples in enemy-territory long before the Muslims had emerged as a political challenge to these kingdoms. Subhatavarman, the Parmar ruler (1193-1210 A.D.), attacked Gujarat and plundered a large number of Jain temples at Dabhoi and Cambay. Harsha, ruler of Kashmir, plundered all the temples in his own kingdom barring four, in order to replenish his treasury, and not a word of protest was uttered. And when he needed still more money and enhanced the amount of tribute due from his subordinate feudal lords, he was dragged down the streets of Srinagar and was done to death".

Do the VHP leaders have the courage to tell this history to the masses? Would they also condemn Hindu rulers like Subhatavarman and Harsha along with Babar?

Why did Muslim rulers build temples?

History also shows ample examples where rulers built shrines of other religions for political gains. The biggest and most revered temple in Ayodhya today is the Hanuman Garhi Temple, built by Mansoor Ali, a Nawab of Oudh. Or take the example of Sringeri Sharada Peetham where Shri

Bharathi Theertha Swami was installed as head, on 19th October of this year. He wore a 6.5 kg golden crown, gifted by the Maharaja of Mysore with diamonds given by the Nizam of Hyderabad. Sringeri was ransacked by the Marathas in 1791 when they desecrated the Sharada temple and looted gold and silver articles. Tipu Sultan of Mysore, then donated funds to Chandrashekhar Bharati, the third ruling Swami, to restore the sacredness of the shrine!

But of course the *Itihasacharyas* — the great historians of the RSS and VHP must not have read this history!

Indian history is replete with examples of the conversion of shrines. Not just mandirs converted into masjids. Buddhist temples have been converted into Hindu temples. Even though Shaivaites and Vaishnavaites are both Hindus, there are a number of examples where Shaiva temples have been forcibly converted into Vaishnava temples and vice versa. Now what if the Shaivaites and Vaishnavaites, both Hindus, follow the VHP's reasoning and start demolishing each other's temples in order to restore them to the original status? Will it unite Hindus or will it lead to disintegration — we would like to ask the VHP, the self-proclaimed unifying force within Hinduism? Nationalist it claims to be, but can its logic lead to anything else but breaking the country?

History has had its share of crimes. But are we to start avenging them today? Are we to make today's children pay the price for yesterday's crimes? A price extracted not just in money, but hatred, bloodshed, rape, murder and destitution?

The heritage of brotherhood

If plunder has its history, so does brotherhood. The brotherhood of the Hindu and Muslim masses has its own inspiring history which the VHP tries to hide.

Prof. Sunil Shrivastava (Dept. of Medieval and Modern History, Allahabad University) and others have shown that as far back as in 1855, the local leaders of Ayodhya from both communities (Raja Devi Baksh Singh, Moulvi Amir Ali, Pandit Ram Chandra Das, etc.) had come to an agreement

to settle the dispute. Both communities would use the place and puja and namaz would be held at different times.

But the British government had to divide to rule. They schemed along with some local Mahants (priests). In the 1857 revolt, these Mahants had helped the British along with some landlords. After crushing the revolt, the British gifted the Mahants, rights over the open land in front of the Babri Masjid and allowed them to build a *chabutara* (platform) to mark the Ram Janmabhoomi. By doing so they killed two birds with one stone — returned the favours done to them during the revolt and also created a vested interest for the Mahants in digging up the wounds of a settled dispute. The British did not stop at just this. After crushing the revolt, they publicly hanged the leaders (who had made the agreement in 1855) on a tree. How much the people wanted communal harmony can be seen from the fact that they started worshipping the tree as a symbol of unity and courage. But this was too much for the British to tolerate and their Awadh Resident got the tree struck down in 1860.

We have to decide today which heritage and history do we uphold — that of the people who lived in communal harmony and the martyrs who gave their lives for the unity of the people, or the history of the communalists who preach only hatred and disunity!

The heritage of hatred

The RSS involvement in the dispute, too, has its own history. After the British Raj ended, the "nationalist" RSS carried forward the mission started by the British — to instigate communal passions and to divide the people.

The collector of Faizabad in 1949 was one Mr. K. K. Nair, known for his sympathies with the RSS, who later joined the Jan Sangh (the then political front of the RSS) after his retirement and contested the assembly elections on a Jan Sangh ticket. He allowed some people to create a volatile situation by surreptitiously installing the idol of Shri Ram in the mosque in December 1949. His wife organised an *Akhand Kirtan* (non-stop prayers) near the mosque so that the idols should not be removed. (*The Telegraph*, 19 October 1989)

The matter was then taken to court to determine the title of the land, and the doors of the shrine were locked. They remained locked for more than 35 years in which time the dispute was forgotten by the people.

Then the RSS opened a new front organisation in the 80s — the VHP. The VHP reopened the dispute. And in 1986, one Mr. V. C. Pandey petitioned that the locks be opened for people to pray. The judge obliged and the state government opened the locks within just 19 minutes after the judgement, on February 1, 1986. The VHP rejoiced and proclaimed the victory of Hindus.

The VHP activists can now freely go to worship Ram. But are they doing so? Instead they are roaming around the country instigating people to break down the shrine! Is it not clear that the VHP is interested not in worship but in communal war?

If Ram and Allah are One — why not pray together?

The VHP says that the masjid must be brought down as the place belongs only to Hindus. The Muslims should not pray there with their Hindu brothers and sisters. By saying this, not only is the VHP negating history (which has shown that the two communities have prayed together) but it is even negating its own words. The VHP in an advertisement entitled 'Why Ram Mandir?' in *Indian Express* dated October 23, 1989, itself claimed "The true importance of Hinduism lies in its belief that all living beings are basically and originally one. It does not matter whether you call this origin as 'Allah', 'God' or 'Parmatma'." When our Muslim brothers' Allah is none other than Ram, then why is the VHP opposed to our Muslim brothers praying to Allah in the Babri Masjid? The VHP is drawing a line between Ram and Allah in order to draw a communal divide between religious Hindus and Muslims living together in harmony and peace.

Some have suggested that the shrine be converted into a national monument. It is important to note that there is no obstacle whatsoever to offer prayers in a national monument, be it to Parmatma, Allah or God. But the VHP has rejected this solution as it wants the shrine to be controlled

by a private trust only. It is not difficult to guess why, once you look at the incomes of religious trusts controlling shrines in India today. E.g. The Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanam received an income of Rs. 72.2 crore just in one year (1988-89). A lot of money is already being generated in the name of Ram in the complex of the disputed site in Ayodhya. The *Akhand Kirtan* which was started in 1950 by Mrs. Shakuntala Nair, the wife of the Faizabad collector, used to take place in a graveyard. The graveyard was turned into a Dharma-shala with 200 rooms. The Akhand Kirtan Fund, now controlled by Baba Ram Dyan Sharan is said have an income of about Rs. 50,000 per day by way of money orders alone! Other similar establishments too have come up in the wake of the Ayodhya dispute. (*Telegraph*, 19 October 1989.) A prototype of the proposed temple greets visitors alongside three boxes for donations. Already three different claimants vie for the shrine's collections. (*India Today* 31 August 1989). But the fund collection drive is not restricted to the shrine alone — the VHP has collected and continues to collect crores of rupees from all over India in the name of building the temple. All communalists have been minting crores of rupees through their innumerable trusts, where unaccountable money is piled up. The RSS is no exception to this. Have the self-proclaimed defenders of Hinduism ever given an account to the Hindus of the enormous money they have collected?

The liberal but hypocritical face of communalism

Of the RSS front organisations, the BJP dons a liberal garb. It claims to have faith in democracy and even secularism and tries to sugarcoat the RSS communal propaganda with sophisticated arguments. Its president Mr. L. K. Advani spelt out the characteristics of secularism which he and his party believe in, in a Rajya Sabha debate on communalism: "The essential part of secularism is that a secular State rejects theocracy. There is no official religion." Sheer hypocrisy! If you reject theocracy Mr. Advani, then why don't you impose a ban on your party colleagues from joining the RSS?

You further say, "The second aspect (of secularism) is that a secular State shall not discriminate between one citizen and another on grounds of religion. It guarantees equality to all". "The third characteristic of a secular State is that it guarantees full freedom of faith and worship." More hypocrisy! You talk of equality Mr. Advani, and deny Muslims an equal right to pray in the disputed shrine! You talk of the freedom of faith and worship, but Muslims must not worship at the disputed shrine! Or is it that some are more equal than others in your definition of secularism?

But you have a more sophisticated argument in store. You say that the controversy in Ayodhya is not simply one of choosing between a temple and a mosque, but "It is time....it is accepted that there is but one India, and that this India and its entire population, Hindu or Muslim, can identify itself with Ram and not with Babar." ('A Tale of Two Temples' by L. K. Advani, *Indian Express*, 30 July 1989.) Yes, the choice is between two perspectives. "Ram by his living example taught the rulers of the world self-sacrifice, self-discipline, compassion, truth, justice and mercy to the oppressed and downtrodden" (*Why Ram Mandir?* by VHP) while Babar stood for despotism and aggression. **The question, Mr. Advani, however, is that whom do you yourself and your organisations — the RSS, BJP, VHP — identify with: Ram or Babar?**

Ram or Babar?

If Babar demolished a shrine in the medieval period, you want one demolished today in the 20th century. And still you have a holier-than-thou attitude towards Babar! "Hinduism never preached the destruction of places of worship of other religions." (*Why Ram Mandir* by VHP.) Then whose preachings do you follow when you say that the Babri Masjid should be destroyed? Though you may pretend to chant Ram's name day in and day out, it is Babar's game that you follow — the same Babar whom you so profusely abuse.

The RSS, BJP, VHP and others who claim to be the defenders of Hinduism are in fact the worst defamers of Hinduism. Any religion preaches love, but they teach to hate, loot and kill in the name of Hinduism. They talk of their

sarvadharmā samābhav even when they are open admirers of Hitler! They hail *Ramrajya*, where the well-being of the *praja* was looked after, but have amassed huge wealth through their trusts in the name of Ram and other deities, while the masses are hungry, naked and homeless.

On the other hand, the Muslim communalists are no different from their Hindu counterparts. They pretend to oppose the Hindu communalists, **but are one with them.** Unitedly, the two divide the masses. Did not the Babri Masjid Action Committee's Meerut chief Mohamed Yamin Ansari's crucial vote make the BJP candidate win the chairman's post in the municipal elections? Similarly, has not the Muslim League voted for Shiv Sena candidates in municipal and mayoral elections? Was not the RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras feted by the Jamaat-i-Islami, and even presented with a golden pen from Saudi Arabia, just prior to the riots of April 1979 in Jamshedpur? The list of such examples is unending.

There are hundreds of mandirs and masjids in our country which are deserted and dilapidated. Shrines where only animals enter and men sit only to gamble. Mandirs and masjids which have been converted into mafia dens. If the communalists were truly interested in championing the cause of their religion, would they not have stopped the abuse of these places of worship?

The foreign *panja* which rules India?

United with both communalists stands the Congress(I) government, adding fuel to the fire from time to time. It was the U.P. government's communal report in its official organ, *Uttar Pradesh*, which dug up the Ayodhya controversy in April 1984. It gave television coverage to the Hindu communalists when it opened the locks of the shrine in a record 19 minutes after the court order on February 1, 1986.

Now the Union Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh, has discovered that "Foreign agencies are involved.....huge amounts of money are coming in and the Hindu communalists are getting ideological backing from groups abroad." Thank you, Mr. Buta Singh, for enlightening us about the foreign hand involved. But we see an Indian *Panja* involved too! Who is

Shiv Nath Kaju, president of the VHP? A Congress(I) member and a son of a former defence minister! Who is Daudayal Khanna, general secretary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti? A Congress(I) member and an ex-minister! On the other hand, who is Maulana Hussain Kachauchi, U.P. chairman of the Babri Masjid Action Committee? A Congress(I) member and a former MP! And the *panja* extends from Delhi to the *galli*.

It is only the progressive and Left forces who have been consistently working to expose the communalists' diabolic games. Though the communalists brand them as atheists, they are the ones who have stood for the right to faith and worship **for everybody**.

Who can solve this "problem"?


First of all, it is important to realise that for the common religious people, there has been and is no problem at all. The true worshippers of Ram have been praying to Him from wherever they are. For them Ram is everywhere and hence they refuse to restrict Him to a temple. They not only accept but also practice what Brahma told Ram in the Ramayan: "You art seen in all creatures, in all regions, in the mountains and rivers..."

Likewise the true worshippers of Allah find Him everywhere. They find him in the hearts of men, in acts of compassion, love, sacrifice and brotherhood.

The "problem" exists for a handful of communalists who want to confine Ram and Allah to the confines of a mandir or masjid. Not because they want to worship, but because they want to destroy worship. The problem exists for them.

How then can we suggest solutions for those who insist on letting the problem fester — for those who want no solutions?

We can only suggest solutions for those who have no problem — the overwhelming mass of Hindus and Muslims. And the solution is to get rid of those who have created the "problem". To expose and oppose all those who defile God by claiming that the All-Mighty requires defence and protection.



Who threatens the V. P. Singh government?

T HIS editorial was written in December 1989 — a few days after Mr.V.P.Singh had formed a minority government at the centre. It points to the dilemma which the V.P. Singh government was soon to face. On the one hand, the BJP which had increased its strength in the Lok Sabha from 2 seats in 1984 to 88 seats in 1989 would intensify the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and would brook no opposition from the government. On the other hand, the V.P.Singh government was dependent on this very BJP for support. How then could the V.P.Singh government escape from this dilemma? What would be the game plan of the BJP? Who would support it in this game plan? These are the questions addressed in this editorial.

THE most commercialised, violent, and brutalised election in the history of "Free India" is finally over. And yet, despite the most brazen mockery of democracy, despite all the bogus voting and booth capturing, despite all the sordid advertisements and slander campaigns, despite all the naked display of money power and muscle power, the elections have ended not in mass cynicism but in faith.

The people are still savouring the joy of rediscovering their power to humble all those who ruled from their peacock thrones and there is a fragrant whiff of hope and expectancy in the air. A spirit of exhilaration is gently blowing across the land and a palpable interest in politics has gripped the commonest of common people of this country. Finally, the man who claimed his heart beats for India has been thrown out. The man for whom the heart of India throbbed expectantly has been elected to the most powerful office of the land.

When Vishwanath Pratap Singh took the oath of office and solemnly pledged to restore the dignity of the country and the individual, all those millions whose dignity and self-respect had been raped during five years of Congress rule shed a silent tear. Tears of joy because here was a man whom Rajiv had thrown out, harassed and hounded for fearlessly exposing corruption. Here was the same man whom the people had not forsaken and had brought back again. The *Rajasaheb* had finally become a symbol that good does ultimately triumph over evil.

But the rising expectations of the people are also tinged by a nagging fear — a fear that maybe the happy days will not last forever. Desperately though the people may wish that this government should succeed, there is already a foreboding that all is not well in the country. It is not just because the people can see through the murderous ambitions of the likes of Chandrashekhar and Yashwant Sinha. It is not only because the people can recognise the inherent instability of the V.P. Singh government. It is primarily there, because the people can instinctively feel that more unstable than the government, is the dangerous instability of our social fabric. An instability wherein Hindus are being induced into believing by their so-called leaders, that they are being

discriminated in India. An instability wherein Muslims and other minorities are being led to believe, that they are no longer safe in Hindustan. An instability deliberately engineered through communal poison and communal baiting, breeding suspicion and insecurity within peoples.

This fear in the hearts of the people is positive if it can make us alert to the precipice which our country is on the brink of. It can be dangerous if it leads towards social paralysis. If we are alert, there is nothing to fear because if the power of the people can confine to the dustbin the unshakable governments of the Rajivs and NTRs, this same power can also overcome the forces that are engendering instability in society. It can crush to dust all those who divide the people in order to rule over them.

What does it mean to be alert?

In the present conditions, to be alert means first and foremost not being under any euphoria or illusion that the secular and progressive forces have scored any **decisive** victory in the present elections. To be alert means to understand that although the V.P. Singh government faces its greatest threat from communal forces, yet this government is dependent upon these very forces to stay in power. To be alert means to recognise the unpleasant fact that although the National Front has formed the government at the centre, yet the only parties which have decisively consolidated their political and organisational strength through the elections have been the BJP, the Shiv Sena and the Akali Dal (Mann), *viz.* the very parties who unabashedly believe that religion should be mixed with politics, that communal divides should be created in order to capture political power.

The BJP which clearly stated that the temple in Ayodhya should be built even if it means demolishing the Babri Masjid, increased its strength in the Lok Sabha from 2 seats in 1984 to 88 seats in 1989. The Shiv Sena which has filed a case in the Supreme Court claiming the right to garner votes on a *Hindutva* platform won four seats in Maharashtra. The Akali Dal (Mann) which has been one of the most strident crusaders of Khalistan wrested as many as 10 seats despite its top leadership being in jail.

Already these parties are planning to capture the citadels of power in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab during the forthcoming state elections. And it will not be long before Muslim fundamentalist forces also officially come to power in Kashmir.

"Democracy" white-washes fundamentalism!

The real gains of the fundamentalists however, cannot be just measured in the seats of power they have won. **Their real triumph lies in the fact that the so-called democratic process has been used to give them legitimacy.** The battle of the ballot has been used to give them official sanction. No one, can anymore dismiss them as extremist outfits led by fanatical leaders, as now they can claim to have received a "popular mandate."

Thus those who constantly divide the people have been elevated to be "representatives of the people." Those who instigate communal riots and break the law have been elected to make the law of the land. The vote has given them respectability. The political pariahs of yesterday have become king-makers today. Tomorrow they will be even more strident in claiming to represent not just their own communities, but the whole nation.

To be sure, in an artificially charged communal environment they can be expected to receive more and more popular support from their respective communities as "defenders of the faith." In a society where the ravages of unemployment daily strip the dignity and self-respect of youth, "defending the faith" has provided these youth with an aggressive self-identity, while communal parties have provided them not only easy targets to vent their frustrations on, but also state support to make them feel invincible. It is these youth who have been the infantry in the electoral battles the BJP, the Shiv Sena and the Khalistanis have won recently. It is they who have helped these parties to claim that a Hindu Rashtra or Khalistan has the support of the masses.

Worse still, with the help of this "democratic mandate", those who breed and foster enmity between communities will insist that they should not be branded as communal. They will insist that their communal activities be called

nationalistic endeavours. It is not surprising that the first demand made by the BJP to the Janata Dal after the elections was that it refrain its members from calling it communal. It will not be long before they demand that their communal and distorted interpretation of history receive official sanction, that their communal outbursts be called patriotic exhortations and that communal riots be termed *dharma yudh* or holy war!

Already the people have got a taste of this holy war. In Jaipur, communal riots broke out as BJP followers, taking out a victory procession began shouting provocative slogans against Muslims. In Bombay, similar processions of the BJP and Shiv Sena led to brick-batting between their followers and Dalits.

"Vote-secularism" collapses!

What are the implications of this victory of fundamentalist forces through the electoral process? First and foremost it has meant the complete collapse of the Congress brand of secularism which the BJP has rightly called "vote-secularism". For the first time in 40 years, this "vote-secularism" has proved impotent to bring in votes for the Congress Party!

This "vote-secularism" did not mean just the appeasement of Muslim and minority fundamentalism, as Mr. L.K. Advani, the president of the BJP would like us to believe. **This "vote-secularism" has meant appeasement of all communal fundamentalisms, including Hindu fundamentalism.**

Mr. Advani is right in stating that the Rajiv government prostrated before the Muslim fundamentalists in the Shah Bano case. However, does he expect us to ignore the fact that the same Rajiv government also gave permission to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to illegally lay the foundation stone of the proposed Ram Mandir in the Babri Masjid complex? Does he expect us to forget how all the prime minister's men lobbied hard with the VHP so that the 'secular' Rajiv himself would lay the foundation stone in Ayodhya?

Yes, Mr. Advani, your understanding of "vote-secularism" is deliberately one-sided. The essence of "vote-secularism" was to bow and scrape before all fundamentalists and not just before Muslim fundamentalists, as you claim.

Thus, Rajiv was more "Hindu" than the RSS when it came to the Ram Shila Poojan, he was more "Muslim" than the Jamaat-i-Islami when it came to the retrogressive Muslim Women's Bill. In Mizoram he actually promised a "Christian Sarkar". For the first time this "appeasement towards all" policy has floundered. And the foundation stone in Ayodhya will go down in history as the stone that broke this policy. **For in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue, it was not possible to appease both the Hindu fundamentalists as well as the Muslim fundamentalists at the same time.**

It was not that the Congress government did not try. While one day, Rajiv was assuring the Babri Masjid Action Committee that the matter will finally be decided by the Supreme Court, the next day he was running to kiss the feet of the naked Devrah Baba — the front man of the VHP — promising him that he will allow the foundation stone to be laid in the Babri Masjid complex. But this acrobatic secularism was doomed to failure. The BJP which had been in the forefront in organising Ram Shilanyas all over the country, stole the communalised Hindu vote while Muslim maulanas began issuing *fatwas* to the Muslims to defeat the Congress Party by voting for the Janata Dal. Some mullahs even went so far as to suggest that Muslims vote for the BJP or the Shiv Sena, if there was no Janata Dal candidate.

Why "vote-secularism" strengthens communalism!

The election results have provided one further proof that the "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party cannot expose and halt the growth of the fundamentalists. It can only strengthen them. Strengthen them, because "vote-secularism" in actual practice means supporting and strengthening the fundamentalists of all religions. It was this "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party that created the Shiv Sena in 1967, to smash the organised working class in

Bombay led by the communists. It was this "vote-secularism" that reared Sant Bhindranwale in Punjab to checkmate the Akali Dal. It was this "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party that supported the Muslim United Front in Kashmir, when Farooq Abdullah was opposed to the Congress Party. It was this "vote-secularism" that egged on Subhash Gheising of the GNLF, in order to cut down to size the Left Front government in West Bengal.

Thus "vote-secularism" which has itself reared Frankenstein monsters cannot oppose the arguments used by the communalists to instigate their communities. This is because "vote-secularism" while pretending to benevolently support all religions, actually ends up by creating a strong sense of discrimination in all communities. It is this sense of discrimination which the fundamentalists exploit to spread inter-communal hatred. The Hindu communalists constantly harp that the government has allowed the Muslims to keep four wives while the Muslim communalists scream that all the Masjids in India will be broken down. That is why "vote-secularism" is impotent when it comes to combating aggressive communal propaganda.

What the BJP has learnt!

The 1989 Lok Sabha elections have taught the BJP and the Shiv Sena one important political lesson they are unlikely to forget in the months to come. The lesson that the "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party can be defeated by aggressively creating volatile issues where it is **not possible for the ruling government to support the rival fundamentalists at the same time**. If the government bows in their favour, they can take the credit for pressurising the government. If the government does not, it can instigate the Hindus that the majority community is being discriminated in their own land. This in short, is the essence of the "positive secularism" tom-tommed by the BJP. It is this "positive secularism" that has replaced the "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party as the latest vote-catcher of the decade!

It would be naive to expect the BJP to forget its "positive secularism", though it supports the National Front government. The BJP is under no illusion that this present

unstable minority government will last. It is preparing for the next round. And it knows that it is "positive secularism", (which is only a castrated form of secularism) which has the greatest potential of making it the ruling party in the future. Already Mr. L.K. Advani, who has made it clear that the BJP will only give critical support to the National Front, has warned the V.P. Singh government that he cannot be expected to be detached or neutral on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. And Mr. Advani's men are all rearing to go, waiting impatiently to create issues which will immediately consolidate the communal divide and make it impossible for Mr. V.P. Singh to please all. For example, Mr. Ram Naik, the BJP MP from Bombay, has announced that he will pilot a bill in Parliament demanding that the name of the country be changed from India to Hindustan. Note very well, that what obsesses this honourable MP are not burning national issues like the more than Rs. 1,00,000 crore foreign debt dumped on our heads by the Rajiv government, but whether this debt will be paid by the people of India or the people of Hindustan.

The fundamental question

That is why the question today is not whether the BJP will forget its "positive secularism". The question today is whether Mr. V.P. Singh will forget the "vote-secularism" he has inherited from the Congress Party. If Mr. Singh clings to the "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party, his government as well as his political future is doomed. If the Rajiv government with its huge majority of 415 MPs could not counteract the BJP with "vote-secularism", it is impossible for the Rajasaheb to do so, especially when his government is precariously dependent on the BJP and the Left parties for support.

The conclusion is inescapable. If the V.P. Singh government attempts to please the fundamentalists of all religions like its predecessor attempted, it will be helpless to halt their onward march. Mr. Singh is under siege and the "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party cannot bail him out.

However, ironically only when old policies become bankrupt and unviable in practice, does a determined search

begin to forge new ones. This is precisely the historic challenge before the new government — the challenge to replace the "vote-secularism" of the Congress Party, by a genuine secularism that will expose and defeat the fraudulent "positive secularism" of the BJP. And the only way to do this in the present situation is to throw back on the BJP's face, what it has itself been preaching all along to prove to the world its secular credentials. The BJP claims that positive secularism means "Justice for all — appeasement towards none." The V.P. Singh government must strictly practise what the BJP only preaches but never practises. **It must strictly practise "appeasement towards none."**

Concretely this means it cannot appease the Hindu fundamentalists and pamper their demand for breaking down masjids. It must categorically state that all people have the fundamental right to religious worship and no religious places will be broken down to avenge crimes committed hundreds of years ago. Likewise the government cannot appease the Muslim fundamentalists by continuing the discrimination of Muslim women through unjust and unequal marriage, divorce, maintenance and property laws, based on a medieval understanding of religion. It should immediately state that it will undo the harm and injustice perpetrated on Muslim women by the Rajiv government which overturned the Supreme Court judgement in the Shah Bano case on maintenance. The new government must immediately set up special courts and hold summary trials to convict and punish all the criminals responsible for the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984, the communal carnages in Meerut, Varanasi, Bhagalpur, Badaun, Kota, Jaipur, Punjab, etc. The only way it can win the sympathy and support of the common people is to immediately punish all those who instigate people to kill, plunder, rape and pillage in the name of religion.

Those who bow and scrape before the fundamentalists may retort that if the V.P. Singh government takes such a firm line, it is bound to fall. We would like to say to these spineless, power-hungry politicians willing to allow a communal holocaust in return for the loaves of office — let the BJP pull down the National Front government and help the

Congress Party to come to power, just because the V.P. Singh government seriously intends to practice "Justice for all — appeasement towards none." The secular pretensions of the BJP will get exposed to the people, as well as its sham anti-Congressism. If the V.P. Singh government vacillates on principles just to remain in power, it will lose power. If it decides to create "harmony" between Imam Bukhari and L.K. Advani, it will be destabilising its own government. It was not the fundamentalists who elected it to power, but the people. And the urgent need of the hour is that the V.P. Singh government must begin a public campaign to explain to the people that it will appease no fundamentalism. The people are the only force that can save the present government from the noose which the fundamentalists are slowly but surely tightening around its neck.

The other hangmen

The fundamentalists are however not the only hangmen waiting in the wings. If the fundamentalists pretending to be the allies of the V.P. Singh government constitute its greatest threat, the sections of the exploiter classes who have benefited in a big way under Rajiv's Raj are its most potent enemies.

For the first time in 40 years, India has a pathetically unstable government at the centre — a government that can be torpedoed not just by its enemies, but also by its so-called friends — a government no one is sure will last till the next morning. Such an unstable government at the centre is a curse for those sections of the exploiters who have raped the country during five years of Rajiv's "stable government."

Without such a "stable government" will it be possible for middlemen and commission agents like the Hindujas and Win Chhaddas to siphon off crores of rupees in the form of kickbacks? Without such a "stable government" will it be possible for corporate sharks like the Ambanis to subvert the financial institutions and use public money to buy shares and gobble up companies? Without a "stable government" will it be possible for builders to dereserve plots reserved for public purposes, in order to make a killing? Without a "stable government" will it be possible for the sugar barons

and the big traders to increase the price of sugar from Rs. 8 per kilo to Rs. 13, as a reward for contributing to the election funds of the ruling party? Without a "stable government" will it be happy days again for the corporate giants who have swindled the treasury of crores of rupees by evading taxes, in return for lining the pockets of the Congress Party? Without a "stable government" will it be possible for the monopolists and multinationals to throw out millions of permanent workers and employees from their jobs, so that modernisation and computerisation can be carried out? Without a "stable government" will it be possible to harass and silence those journalists who bravely expose how the exploiters corrupt the government machinery and convert it into their private fiefdom?

Yes a "stable government" is a must for these bloodsuckers. So that the stock markets can be made to artificially boom and fall for the benefit of speculators and stockbrokers — so that foreign capital is not "frightened off" — so that foreign loans can keep on pouring into the country, although we are getting locked-up in a debt trap. And mind you, they are not going to let anyone deprive them of their vision, their dream, their hope for India. Because as we have been told, "their heart beats for India."

Why the "game" is not over?

That is why those whose hearts palpitate for the country are not happy with the electoral verdict. That is why for these "patriots" the game is not over after the 9th Lok Sabha election. As *The Times of India*, reflecting the uneasiness and dissatisfaction of these 'patriots' concisely put it in its editorial dated November 28, 1989: "The tournament has not ended. What the country has just witnessed is no more than a semi- final."

Note, how for the exploiters, democracy is nothing but a game where the electorate are pawns to be shifted, manipulated and even coerced to provide a mandate for those seeking to play with the future and destiny of the people.

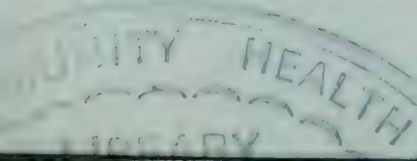
It is these exploiters who are most troubled by the electoral verdict. Troubled because a minority government in essence means a government under perpetual siege and

hence more accountable. It means a government that is constantly functioning under the glare of a fragmented but majority opposition, waiting to pounce at it at the slightest pretext. This is not the type of government the most reactionary exploiters can tolerate for long, habituated as they are to operate in the dark and behind the backs of the people.

But there is also a deeper reason as to why the most aggressive and vicious sections of the exploiters will not tolerate a minority government. Today the rivalry between especially the monopoly capitalists themselves has reached such a crude level that each section requires the State machinery to finish off its rivals. The famous Ambani-Wadia rivalry has shown how the vicious war between the monopolists is being fought not just on the streets with gun-wielding toughs, not just in company boardrooms and the stock markets of the country but above all in the corridors of power in Delhi and the state capitals — especially in the posh offices of the financial institutions controlled by the government. Such a rivalry cannot decisively be fought when a minority government is in power, surrounded by hawks representing the various rival interests. Such a minority government cannot be easily used to upstage, checkmate or finish off business rivals especially when the hawks in the opposition and the allies of this government can unite to expose the government or even bring it down.

Hence the frantic search by these exploiters for a "stable government" which can blatantly take their side in the continuous rivalry, without their crimes being exposed and without their government being destabilised.

However, such a government is only possible by destabilising the existing V.P. Singh government. And it is here where the interests of the most reactionary sections of the monopoly capitalist class merge with the political ambitions of the fundamentalists, especially the BJP. The BJP is determined to use the Ram Janmabhoomi issue to intensify the communal divide, to prepare for the finals. The reactionary sections of the monopolists are determined to destabilise this government and hence will hot up the Ram Janmabhoomi controversy. Rest assured, in all this, the Congress Party is



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just waiting in the wings to tell the people to learn from their mistakes and to understand at even this late hour, that only the Congress Party can give stability to the country!

Through what sordid backdoor tactics, the enemies of democracy will attempt to form their "stable government" cannot be said at the moment. Who among the Janata Dal will play the role of Brutus and how soon will it take place? Will it end up with finally the Congress(I) being returned to power or the BJP becoming the ruling party through opportunistic alliances and defections or through mid-term Lok Sabha polls, cannot be predicted at the moment. All that can be stated with certainty is that the most rabid exploiters of the Indian people together with the fundamentalists are all set to play the most sinister and macabre game since the partition of the country in 1947, in their search for a "stable government" — a government which will remain "stable" by generating the most violent divisions and hatred among the people and unleashing the most fascist repression on all those struggling for secularism and justice.


The only honourable option

We have no illusions that the V.P. Singh government can halt this dangerous movement towards fascism. We do not even know definitely whether this government will at least go down boldly fighting it, and provide a rallying point for the people to continue the struggle in the next round. This government is faced with no honourable option except one. To vigorously prepare for the next round by showing the people that it is irreconcilably opposed to both the "vote-secularism" of the Congress and the "positive secularism" of the BJP, both of which are fraudulent forms of secularism; to demonstrate through practice that it refuses to mix religion with politics.

We believe it is only the working people of this country who in the final analysis will defend communal harmony and peace. Only they have the power to defeat the communalists of all religions. It is only they who will protect the V.P. Singh government from attack, if only this government shows them that it will not compromise with any form of communal fundamentalism. And

it is here where the people of Ayodhya who have been in the eye of the storm, have shown the way forward. In the Faizabad constituency of which Ayodhya is a part, the self-proclaimed champions of *Hindutva* withdrew from the electoral battle in favour of the Congress(I) whom they pretend to oppose at the centre. Opposing this alliance of the Congress(I) and the BJP was the candidate of the Communist Party of India who stood on a platform of communal harmony and for the strict separation of religion from politics. The people of Faizabad, both Hindus and Muslims, thirsting for peace and brotherhood, defeated the Congress(I) and elected the secular CPI candidate. The fundamentalists had lost. The people had won.

It is only by learning from the heroic actions of the people of Ayodhya, that the V.P. Singh government can also win.



Shivaji betrayed by his 'Sainiks'

ONE of the important strategic successes of the fascists has been their ability to appropriate the past. Not only have they monopolised Gods and Goddesses but have also hijacked the achievements of highly honoured men and women in Indian history, to serve the cause of fascism. Shivaji, Rani of Jhansi, Vivekananda, Ambedkar and even Gandhi have become part of the pantheon of the Hindutvawadis, although these men and women had nothing in common with fascist ideology. The article below by Sandeep Kolhatkar, published in February 1990, is about Shivaji who has been appropriated by the Shiv Sena. It exposes the unbridgeable gulf that exists between Shivaji the ruler and those who claim to be his Sainiks today.

SHIVAJI'S name is a revered name in history, not just in Maharashtra, but throughout India. While almost all kings got their kingdoms in inheritance, palace coups or gifts, Shivaji's kingdom was established through the struggles and sacrifices of the common people. Hence, no king became such a popular hero of the masses in medieval times as Shivaji.

However, there has also been no other king, whose glorious deeds and heritage has been as distorted and abused as that of Shivaji. Abused and distorted by the so-called followers of Shivaji. Although Shivaji never discriminated against any religion and respected the people of all communities, yet the communalists of today are painting Shivaji in their own image and likeness.

Some even go to the extent of describing him as the incarnation of Shiva sent on this earth, when Muslim rule in India was at its zenith, just to destroy the infidels and protect the Hindu religion. Nothing can be further from the truth. Shivaji defended not only the right of his Hindu subjects to worship, but also defended the right of his Muslim subjects to practise their religion. The so-called followers of Shivaji portray him as a Hindu king who fought Muslims because of their religion. In actual fact Shivaji never fought all Muslims, but only a few Muslim kings, because of their cruel method of exploiting the common people. The portrayal of Shivaji as a Hindu king rests on the totally false premise that there was in the first place a Muslim Rule in India. But was there really a Muslim Rule in India?

Were all Muslims rulers?

The term 'Muslim Rule in India' was coined by the colonial British historians to falsely describe the medieval period of Indian history. Since the aim of the colonialists was to divide and rule, their historians described the medieval period as 'Muslim Rule', so that the crimes committed by a few Muslim rulers could be put on the head of all Muslim common people. It is through such a sleight-of-hand that they sowed the seeds of discord and enmity between the Hindu and Muslim communities. By falsely depicting the medieval period as 'Muslim Rule', the British historians successfully

created a distorted consciousness that all Muslims were rulers and all Hindus the subjects. But was this really so?

If all Muslims were rulers, how is it that Shah Jehan cut off the hands of thousands of artists, craftsmen and labourers who built the Taj Mahal, many of whom were Muslims? Do rulers get their hands cut as a reward for their works of splendour? During the Moghul rule, lakhs of Muslim tenants and share-croppers perished in famines and due to the atrocities of jagirdars. Thousands of Muslim craftsmen were so pauperised that they had to live on alms and charity. Do rulers live on alms and charity?

In short, the Muslim masses were not the rulers. It was only a few Muslim dynasties that ruled. These Muslim rulers did not rule because of their love for Islam, but because of their political greed for power and economic loot.

That is why the 'Muslim' Humayun and the 'Muslim' Shershah fought with all their might against each other for the throne of Delhi. The throne of Delhi meant not just the act of sitting on it, but getting all the royal tributes, whether in the form of money, gold or produce from all the vassal kings of northern India. The 'Muslim' Adilshah of Bijapur and the 'Muslim' Nizamshah of Ahmednagar fought each other over who should control the fruits of plunder in western India. In the same manner the 'Muslim' Aurangzeb fought the 'Muslim' Adilshah of Bijapur and the 'Muslim' king of Golconda, for the control of the surrounding regions of western and central India.

To prove that there was 'Muslim Rule' in India, Hindu communalists have used the fact that **Jazia** was imposed on non-Muslims. But these one-sided communalists have hidden the fact that just as there was **Jazia** on non-Muslims, there was a tax called **Zakat** on Muslims, which was about 10 per cent of their income. Where the question of looting money from the 'Muslim' masses was concerned, why did 'Muslim' kings leave their religion aside? If all Muslims were rulers, at least they would have been exempt from taxes!

Were all the Hindus, subjects?

It is true that the large majority of the Hindus were just as oppressed as their Muslim brethren. Most of them were peasants and craftsmen, oppressed by their overlords. However, all Hindus were not subjects. A few powerful Hindus formed an integral part of the 'Muslim ruling class.'

From ancient times and even under the so-called 'Muslim Rule in India', the local administration from the central to the village level was largely in the hands of Hindus. Dynasties, emperors, kings, rajas and maharajas came and went, but this administration was kept intact and permanent. Thus, in fact it was largely Hindus who were running the administration of the Muslim kings. The Moghul crown of Delhi rested on the shoulders of hundreds of Hindu chiefs paying tribute to it.

It was mainly due to Hindu officials, that the Muslim kings succeeded in running their administration, as the following examples clearly illustrate. Raja Mansingh, the commander-in-chief of Akbar, was a Hindu. Shivaji's father, Shahji Bhonsle did work for the Muslim kings, such as Nizamshah of Ahmednagar and Adilshah of Bijapur. Shahji received the *jagir* of Pune from the 'Muslim' Adilshah of Bijapur, for his services rendered as an able commander on the battlefield. So much was he esteemed as an able commander, that Nizamshah of Ahmednagar, the Moghul king, Adilshah of Bijapur and Kutubshah of Golconda all vied with each other for his services, which were given for a price in the form of land grants. Some of his *jagirs* extended to the Carnatic.

Afzal Khan whom Shivaji fought against was a colleague of Shahji in the court of Bijapur. Like Shahji there were numerous Maratha lieutenants in the court of Bijapur. Shivaji's grandfather on his mother's side, Lakhuji Jadhav, was a mansabdar in Maharashtra, under the Nizamshahi. Among Shivaji's relatives, the Mores, the Nimbalkars of Phaltan, Khem Sawant of Sawantwadi, Surya Rao Shingalpure of Shringarpur, were all mansabdars of Adilshah of Bijapur. Many Marathas such as Morar Jadeo reached the highest command under Muslim Sultans and one or two

even became prime ministers, like Akkana and Madanna in Golconda.

There were even ordinary posts under the Muslim kings where Hindus were employed. Afzal Khan himself had a Hindu lawyer named Krishnaji Bhaskar, working for him when he fought Shivaji. Under emperor Aurangzeb, a Hindu Rajput commander, Mirza Raje Jaisingh was considered able and was regarded with high esteem. Shivaji had to even accept defeat in battle with Mirza Raje Jaisingh and go to Agra to pay his respects to Aurangzeb. In Mirza Raje Jaisingh's army which fought against Shivaji, there were Hindus, Jats, Marathas and Rajput lieutenants and soldiers too.

Under the so-called 'Muslim Rule in India', the Muslim kings should have increased the percentage of Muslims in their administration, but did not do so. Under Aurangzeb there were Hindu mansabdars, whose percentage at the beginning of his reign was said to be 21.6 per cent, which was later raised to 31.6 per cent.

Thus in Medieval India, both the Hindu and Muslim kings, rajas, zamindars, watandars, jagirdars, exploited and looted both the Hindu and Muslim masses with equal vigour. It is in opposition to this system of exploitation and not against the so-called 'Rule of Muslims', that Shivaji established his kingdom, when he fought Hindu and Muslim kings.

Whom did Shivaji fight?

What was the system of exploitation Shivaji fought and in struggle against which, thousands of Hindu and Muslim working people sacrificed their lives?

The medieval system of administration was a system that bred extortionists and parasites. The entire administration from top to bottom consisted of different officials and soldiers who were almost not paid any salaries by the king, and instead were gifted huge estates, *jagirs*, *watans*, and a number of villages by the king, for services rendered. These *jagirs* and *watans* were huge regions containing whole villages and thousands of acres of agricultural land. The jagirdar and watandar would corner about 90 per cent of the peasant's

produce, leaving him and his family to starve for months on end. Even in the days of famines, high revenues were forcibly extorted. The monarch was never concerned with what happened on the *jagirs* and *watans*, so long as he got a part of the money looted and as long as the jagirdar lent his soldiers to him in times of war.

The jagirdar or watandar permanently maintained his own standing army. If the peasants refused to pay 90 per cent of the produce as tribute to the jagirdar or watandar, this standing army would inflict barbaric punishments on the peasants and their families. To rape the women of the common people under the jagirdar or watandar was considered by him as an inviolable right guaranteed by law. Burning people's homes, destroying standing crops and riding through standing crops were everyday barbaric atrocities committed by the watandars on their people.

Shivaji was against this cruel, barbaric and exploitative rule. He fought against this system by abolishing the system of granting *jagirs*, *watans*, estates, villages, etc. He

started a new system in his kingdom, under which all his officials from top to bottom were paid salaries by the king. They could not go on rampage-and-plunder campaigns because of the check kept on them. The common people could complain to the king about any official and severe punishments were meted out against wrongdoers by Shivaji.

In Shivaji's time agricultural land was measured and the land revenue assessed according to the land's fertility and whether it had water sources such as wells, etc. All land revenue was paid directly to the king. In times of famine and other natural calamities, crop failure, etc., Shivaji totally exempted the peasants from paying any revenue. If riding troops rode through fields which had standing crops, they were severely punished. Even fodder for horses was bought by paying cash from state money and not robbed from the peasants. Trade and industry were protected.

It is this system of administration which eliminated parasites and overlords that endeared Shivaji to the masses. No wonder they idolised Shivaji as a popular hero because he established and defended such a system. Thus when

Shivaji fought Afzal Khan, Adilshah and Aurangzeb, he did not fight them because they were Muslims or to defend 'Hinduism' as is made out to be. He fought them because they stood for a parasitical form of State administration. When the Hindu and Muslim masses gave their lives for Shivaji's kingdom, they gave it to safeguard the material benefits that such a kingdom bestowed on them.

Compare the behaviour of Shivaji against the system of extortion with that of his so-called followers today. It is a known fact that today the so-called followers of Shivaji extort money from workers, slum dwellers, hawkers and petty shopkeepers, most of whom happen to be Hindus. On July 8, 1988, 400 petty traders from Dharavi (Asia's largest slum) took out a morcha after they were assaulted by local Shiv Sainiks when they refused to donate Rs. 800 each for a disco in the area.

In the same year, a cassette containing a conversation between some Gujarati traders and Mr. Diwakar Raote (Shiv Sena) corporator, who was then the head of the Standing Committee of the Bombay Municipal Corporation was played in the B.M.C. Angry that these small traders were only paying Rs. 5000 as donation to his party, Raote threatened them and boasted of how his party had organised the killing of hundreds of people in communal riots in Ahmedabad and Bhiwandi. On January 23, 1989, the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, honestly admitted that it was the Congress(I) party that had taught the SS to take bribes and make money in the B.M.C. Need we say more about the extortionist policy of the so-called followers of Shivaji?

No favouritism

Let us come back to Shivaji. The Maharaj did not spare even Marathas who parasited and extorted from the people. He even did not spare his own family members who indulged in this practice. When Shivaji eliminated many parasites by starting the system of direct payment of taxes by the peasant to the king, the Maratha families whose source of loot was stopped, such as those of Baji Ghorpade, Baji Mohite, Nimbalkar, Desai from Konkan, the Deshmukhs and Deshpandes opposed Shivaji. Shivaji fought them tooth and

nail even though they were his relatives, because according to his principles they were in the wrong. Shivaji's own blood relatives on his father's and mother's side, such as Varoji Bhonsle, Mambaji Bhonsle, Jagdev Rao Jadhav, Ralhoji Mane were against him. Dattaji Raje Jadhav and Rustom Rao Jadhav, Shivaji's own relatives on his mother's side, fought in Shaisthakhan's army against Shivaji with the intention of getting the Pune **jagir** for themselves and with it the surrounding regions' land revenue.

Today the Shiv Sena too is complaining that just as the Marathas opposed Shivaji in those days, so also today many Marathas such as the sugar barons supporting Mr. Sharad Pawar are opposing the SS. The Maratha jagirdars opposed Shivaji because he opposed their barbaric forms of plunder. Has the SS likewise ever opposed the sugar barons and the economic and political clout they wield? Has it opposed the sugar landlords who refuse to pay their labourers, most of them Hindus, even the minimum wages? Has the SS launched any agitation against the sugar barons who increased the price of sugar from Rs. 7 to Rs. 14 in a few months to make crores of rupees for themselves and their Congress masters? Is it not a fact that the SS instead of opposing the exploitation by the sugar barons, is as much trying to woo them into its camp?

Compare how Shivaji treated the toiling people and how his so-called followers behave today. While Shivaji protected the peasants from their oppressors, his so-called followers glorify and support the oppressors today. One of the leaders of the SS, Khim Bahadur Thapa, is a municipal corporator who has been detained under N.S.A. twice and who has three murder cases against him. One of Thapa's main occupations has been the clearing of homes occupied by the poor (most of them Hindus), so that the builders earn crores of rupees in profits. Of course today with the state assembly elections round the corner, Mr. Bal Thackeray in a speech at Shivaji Park in January this year, promised that the SS would, if it comes to power, build 40 lakh homes for slum dwellers. While Maharashtra's Congress(I) chief minister, Mr. Sharad Pawar went one step further by promising to build 50 lakh homes. Would it not be better if Mr. Bal Thack-

eray and Sharad Pawar tell us how many homes of the poor the B.M.C. and the state government have destroyed while the SS and Congress(I) have been in power?

Shivaji had a record for punishing even the high and mighty of his kingdom who perpetrated crimes against the people. In 1678, a commander of Shivaji's army, Sakuji Gaikwad was found guilty of raping a woman, Savitri Bai, the commander of the enemy fort, at Belwadi. Shivaji had Sakuji Gaikwad severely punished and sentenced to life imprisonment for his deeds. Compare this to the so-called followers of Shivaji. When Khim Bahadur Thapa attended his first meeting at the B.M.C. the Shiv Sainiks gave him a hero's welcome. He was carried on the shoulders of the ex-mayor, Chhagan Bhujbal, and other SS corporators.

Was Shivaji against Islam?

Shivaji never discriminated against Muslims and respected their forms of worship. He considered all his subjects equal. Khafi Khan, a contemporary Muslim historian, has notably written that Shivaji had given strict instructions to his soldiers that wherever they carried out the task of plundering the enemy, no mosque or Koran be defiled nor any woman's chastity be robbed. If any Koran was found, it had to be respectfully surrendered to a Muslim servant.

In a personal letter to Raghunath Pandit Rao, dated November 2, 1669, Shivaji himself states that "each person should follow the religion he chooses, without any restriction from anyone." Shivaji's stand on Islam is quite clear. But what have the self-proclaimed devotees of Shivaji to say? As a prelude to the Bombay-Bhiwandi 'communal' riots, which the SS and the Muslim fundamentalists engineered, the SS chief, Bal Thackeray, in a speech on April 21, 1984, called Muslims a "cancer." He said, "O Hindus, take weapons in your hands and remove this cancer from your roots."

Shivaji preached to his men never to destroy mosques. However, his followers today are the most vociferous in demanding that the Babri Masjid be demolished and in its place the Ram Mandir be built. Are they not closer to Aurangzeb, who destroyed temples and built mosques in their place?

Why did the Muslims trust Shivaji? The impartial and beneficial way in which Shivaji's administration was run won him the trust and loyalty of not just Hindus but also Muslims. Shivaji reciprocated this trust by keeping Muslims in high posts. The armoury which was considered very vital in war, was in charge of Ebrahim Khan, while the chief of the Coast Guard was Daulat Khan. If Shivaji was anti-Muslim, would he have entrusted such top ranks of his administration to Muslims?

So precious and dear had Shivaji become to some Muslims that Madari Mether, a Muslim, risked his life to help Shivaji escape from Agra. In 1660, when Shivaji fought Afzal Khan and Rustomjama, a Muslim lieutenant, Siddi Hilal, fought on Shivaji's side. In the same year, Siddi Johar laid siege to Panhalgad. In an attempt to break this siege, Siddi Hilal's son who fought on Shivaji's side was seriously injured and taken prisoner by Siddi Johar. If Shivaji hated Muslims or Islam, why would Muslims along with their families serve Shivaji with such sacrifice and devotion?

It is true the SS too boasts that it has many Muslims holding top posts such as *shakha pramukh* in its organisation. It claims not to be anti-Muslim and that it welcomes the help of 'patriotic' Muslims. But whom the SS considers patriotic can be seen from its record. During the B.M.C. elections, the SS had taken the support of the Dalit Muslim Suraksha Mahasangh led by the smuggler Haji Mastan Mirza. In April 1988, the 'Hindu' SS solicited the support of four Muslim League councillors to retain the mayorship of the B.M.C. and did get their votes to win the election.

The SS has so much love for 'patriotic' Muslims, that at the funeral procession of the dreaded criminal don Babu Reshim, SS and Congress(I) corporators rubbed shoulders with the deceased's associates. The SS even enforced a Dongri bandh as a mark of respect to Reshim. If anti-social elements are regarded as patriotic, then we suppose that the overwhelming majority of Muslims who are law-abiding must be regarded by the *Shiv Bhakths* as unpatriotic and anti-national. No wonder they do not hesitate to slaughter them during communal riots.

How did Shivaji view women?

Shivaji had deep respect for women. Khafi Khan, a contemporary Muslim historian, writes that whenever any Hindu or Muslim women were taken as prisoners, if there was no one to protect them, Shivaji himself saw to their protection.

In an age where the kings, watandars, zamindars, Deshmukhs and Patils considered the women of the common people as objects to satisfy their sensual pleasures, Shivaji set a very different example.


In village Raazia, the watandar Patil, in broad daylight, kidnapped a peasant's daughter. This girl was raped and out of sheer frustration committed suicide later. The entire village was shaken by this incident, but kept quiet out of fear. When Shivaji heard of this incident, he got the watandar Patil tied up and brought to Pune. There he was strictly punished and his hands and legs were broken. In an age where it was looked upon as a right for the aristocracy to do what they chose with women, Shivaji stood against the oppression of women.

Now let us examine the record of the present day followers of Shivaji. As far back as 1980, the Panvel zilla Shiv Sena pramukh proudly said, "We have friends in many matka and bootlegging dens. They help us for they know we can help them too." How many women would feel secure with such friends of the SS? In 1989, the SS, the BJP, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Congress(I) supported Baba Singh, who refused to immerse four Ganpati idols, so as to divert attention from the move of the police to arrest him under N.S.A. Baba Singh is a notorious criminal having 1000 cases lodged against him and has a track record of molesting women, intimidating, harassing, beating up and extorting money from the local residents of Vasheri hills in Bombay. So much for the protection given to women by our so-called defenders of Shivaji!

Just as the common people helped Shivaji to establish his kingdom, so also his so-called followers are imploring the common people of Maharashtra today to vote on February 27, 1990, for a '*Hindutva*' government. But has the SS or

for that matter the Congress(I), emulated any of the great deeds of Shivaji? Shivaji practiced his *Hindutva*, not by calling for the destruction of masjids, or abusing Muslims and spreading communal poison. His *Hindutva* consisted of a merciless struggle against the oppressors of the people. It consisted of compassion towards the weak and protection to women.

How *Hindutvawad* are our *Hindutvawadis* of today?



How the Janata Dal is digging its own grave!

T HIS editorial was written in February 1990, after the results of elections to nine state legislative assemblies had come in. In most states, the Janata Dal for a second time continued to have an electoral understanding with the BJP, despite this party's firm resolve to intensify the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. In Gujarat and Rajasthan, the JD and BJP also formed coalition governments. How the Janata Dal dug its own grave is now history!

EVEN as the results to the 27th February elections to the seats of power in nine states poured out, there was celebration in the Janata Dal ranks. Democracy has triumphed, they proclaimed! Never mind the cut-throat competition between the BJP, the Congress(I), the Shiv Sena and the Janata Dal in capturing booths or casting bogus votes, never mind how many voters were coerced, intimidated or bribed, never mind the billions of rupees that dragged democracy into the market place and made the sacred right to vote a purchasable commodity, never mind the hundreds of those killed, as the battle of the ballot degenerated into the battle of the bullet, never mind anything.....after all, the Congress(I) has been kicked out of power!

Despite brutally depriving millions of their right to vote, the elections did provide a barometer, although a crude one, of the public mood. For, in north India, despite the crude attempts of the Jagannath Mishras, the Madhavsingh Solankis and the S.C. Shuklas to whitewash five years of sin, by feverishly attempting to bribe the people for the past three months, they were harshly booted out of power. And in Maharashtra, the people rejected the ugly fascist face of the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance, even at the cost of voting for the hated Congress which created this Frankenstein. Thus did the ballot box boot out the people's tormentors.

But the ballot box also tells us something else. It tells us, that while the Congress(I) has lost in the north, the largest number of states and seats have been won, not by the Janata Dal, **but by the BJP.**

So what, exclaims our Janata Dal leader, after all, the BJP is our ally, and is even supporting our government at the centre.

Yes, of course, TODAY it is. But take the trouble to cast a look at Maharashtra and only the blind can fail to see which way the wind is blowing.

What happened in Maharashtra?

In Maharashtra, the BJP, that self-proclaimed champion of democracy has chosen to ally not with the Janata Dal, but with the Shiv Sena, which is OPENLY contemptuous of

democracy and secularism. In fact, the Sena fuhrer Bal Thackeray, openly boasts that he believes in *thokshahi* (rule by force) and not *Lokshahi* (democracy). While the BJP creates an image that it is a great defender of press freedom, Thackeray during the election campaign PUBLICLY called journalists owls and earthworms. While the BJP always projects itself as consisting of 'decent' and 'cultured' people, the Sena is OPENLY obscene and abusive in public. The star speaker of the alliance Dada Kondke cannot make a speech without suggestive and derogatory innuendoes about women. While the BJP claims to believe in what it calls 'positive secularism', the Sena chief is OPENLY abusive and threatening towards Muslims and Dalits and threatens to cut off the hands and burn the tongues of those Muslims whom "HE" will decide are anti-national. The BJP projects itself as the protector of democratic institutions, while the Sena OPENLY threatens to pull down judges and pours venom on the courts. The BJP claims to stand for a clean and decent public life, yet the Sena upstaged the Congress in spending money, capturing booths, enlisting bogus voters, intimidating voters, etc.

It is with the self-proclaimed ideologues of dictatorship, of Hindu chauvinism, of admirers of Hitler, that the BJP has allied in Maharashtra, rejecting its 'friend', the Janata Dal.

But, our Dal leader is unperturbed. So what, says he, the BJP in Maharashtra is different from the BJP in the rest of India. There is a difference between Pramod Mahajan on the one hand and Vajpayee and Advani on the other.

We do not believe in these so-called differences — not because this is our personal opinion, but because this is the opinion of the BJP itself. In fact, Maharashtra BJP general secretary, Pramod Mahajan, while referring to Dal leader, Mrs. Mrinal Gore's assertion that the BJP in Maharashtra is more "Hindu-obsessed" than the BJP elsewhere, retorted that this was entirely untrue, that the BJP stand in Maharashtra was entirely consistent with its all-India policy, and pointed out for example, that L.K. Advani himself had performed the *Ram Shila Poojan*. More importantly, both Vajpayee and Advani have repeatedly emphasised that the

BJP-SS alliance in Maharashtra was entirely consistent with the BJP's overall outlook.

In fact, even after this election, when Vajpayee was asked if the alliance would be given up, he said, "We do not leave our friends in midstream."

We thank you Mr. Vajpayee, for your words show clearly, not your fidelity to your 'friends', **but which friends you will leave in the lurch and which friends you will not betray.** For, Maharashtra demonstrates that the BJP will not hesitate to drop a 'friend' like the Janata Dal, when an openly right-wing fascist party with whom it can ally, like the Shiv Sena, exists. **In such a situation it has shown that it will shun the centrists and form a right-wing fascist alliance which will ferociously attack not only the Congress(I) but also its 'friend', the Janata Dal.** In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena went to the extent of describing the Janata Dal as consisting of "traitors" and "anti-nationals" and describing their symbol as *deshdrohi chakra* (traitorous wheel).

The BJP — the Janata Dal's 'friend', coalition partner in Gujarat and Rajasthan and ally at the centre, did not utter a word of protest.

When the BJP dropped its liberal mask!

In Maharashtra, the BJP took off its liberal mask and showed the contempt with which it views the centrists like the Janata Dal. Maharashtra shows what the BJP will do in the future, as and when similar right-wing parties emerge in the rest of the country.

For all democrats, Maharashtra holds a further warning — for it has exposed that behind the 'democratic', 'secular' mask of the BJP, is the ugly and cruel face of fascism. In Maharashtra its naked face was exposed not only by the alliance with the fascist Shiv Sena, but also by the conduct of the BJP itself during the elections. Pramod Mahajan stooped to the gutter when he lavishly praised Hitler in his press statement and made derogatory remarks about Rajiv Gandhi having a Parsi father, a Christian wife and being 'bevarshi' himself! (suggestively illegitimate). Such was their

'decency' and 'culture'! But who is going to explain all this to our secular, democratic Janata Dal leaders?

Despite all the abuse and scorn, the contempt and accusations heaped on them by the Shiv Sena and the BJP in Maharashtra, the Dal's Maharashtra president, Mrs. Mrinal Gore, insists, that while she is not willing to support the Sena in forming a government, she is willing to support the BJP, because the Sena is 'uncultured' and 'uncouth', while the BJP is 'cultured' and has a 'programme'! This is the very same Mrinal Gore, who in 1979 spearheaded the collapse of the Janata government under Morarji Desai, to protest against the double membership of the RSS members in the Janata Party. Surely, amnesia too should have its limits!

Further, the Janata Dal refused to aggressively attack the BJP or even the Shiv Sena during the election campaign. Even in Maharashtra, V.P. Singh in his conveniently brief tour of Maharashtra had nothing more to say against communalism other than "when a Hindu mother loses her son in a riot and a Muslim mother loses her son, are their tears any different?" The people of Maharashtra rewarded this commitment to secularism by giving the Janata Dal just 25 seats and the entire Progressive Democratic Front less seats than the BJP alone!

As for the rest of India — what Mrinal Gore was not given a chance to achieve in Maharashtra, was accomplished in Gujarat and Rajasthan by the formation of JD-BJP coalition governments. Now that they are in such a tight embrace, we suppose that the Janata Dal's criticism of the BJP will only be whispered in the latter's ear.

Of course, our JD leader will be quick to point out that they are "forced" to keep silent because of the instability of the V.P. Singh government, because they must rule for five years at all costs, because the 1979 fiasco must not be repeated at all costs, because...because.....

To these 'democrats' we would like to point out, that despite their attitude of 'appeasing' the BJP (witness their virtual banning of Tipu Sultan on 'autonomous' T.V. and their withdrawal of income-tax cases on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad), the National Front government continues to be

unstable and will continue to be so, as long as it depends on the support of the BJP, which OPENLY states that it is hostile to the secularism espoused by the Janata Dal. However, stability can only be achieved by winning and maintaining the faith and confidence of the masses, by refusing to compromise on principle just to stick to power. If the National Front government were to consistently and bravely stick to its principles, despite being a minority government, the BJP would never dare to topple it, and were it to do so, it would have to face the wrath of the masses. In a word, only the stability of the faith of the masses, can provide stability to the government.

Why the Janata Party lost in 1980?

The Janata Party lost the elections in 1980, not because they failed to rule for five years, but because the people saw that the government collapsed due to the personal ambitions and greed for power of different Janata Party leaders. The lesson the Janata Dal should have learnt from 1979, is the importance of not compromising on principles just to stick to power. By refusing to oppose the Sena today, by entering into coalitions with the BJP, it has effectively given up all moral right to attack ANY of the communalists, be they the Muslim League, the Akalis or the Hindu chauvinists. Thus, it has given up the possibility of a principled stand on the most important question facing our country today. ✓

On the other hand, the BJP is deliberately refusing to join the government at the centre, so that it can pretend to take a very principled stand (naturally its own principles) and thus win the confidence of the people, even as the 'stick to power at all costs' National Front government loses it.

'Critical support' according to the BJP means basically criticism, and support only because at least as yet, they cannot rule alone. They are the first to bask in the achievements of the government, and are the first also to pounce on the errors. Meanwhile, by packing the State machinery with their own people, they are preparing the grounds for their future rule. Already, it is their governors, their judges, their policemen, their bureaucrats who are being appointed, as when the BJP chief minister of Madhya

Pradesh recently appointed a number of RSS men as chairmen of public sector corporations.

In a word, they are the enemies of the Janata Dal from within, much more dangerous than the Congress. Tomorrow, with allies like the Sena in Maharashtra and their counterparts in the rest of the country, it is preparing to seize power alone.

Who funds the muscle-power of the fascists?

In a large measure, this increased 'strength' of the BJP stems from the support of powerful sections of the monopoly capitalist class. In January 1990, we had predicted that the neo-rich monopolists like the Ambanis and Mallyas who were the bastions of support of the Congress, and who could be adversely affected by the National Front government, would now fund the BJP and other reactionary parties to maintain their hold over State power. The truth of this was seen in the assembly elections, where the SS-BJP alliance heavily outspent the Congress in Maharashtra, leading one to wonder who the ruling party really was. Already the Janata Dal is virtually irrelevant in Maharashtra politics. How long will it be before this is repeated in the north?

The one positive outcome of these state elections is that by catapulting the BJP to power in several states, it has created a golden opportunity for the masses to observe and see which Hindus the BJP really represents. For, between Hindu tendu-leaf contractor and Hindu tendu leaf picker, between the Hindu wholesale trader, who makes super-profits by black-marketing sugar, and the Hindu masses, who have been promised cheap sugar, between the Hindu monopolist lusting for cheap labour and the Hindu worker struggling for minimum wages, is a chasm, an abyss that all the rhetoric of the BJP can never overcome. The reactionaries, the fascists will themselves create the conditions to expose themselves. But how prepared is the Left to carry out this task, now that the Janata Dal has voluntarily abdicated this role?

Hindu Rashtra in danger!

THE Ram Janmabhoomi movement is not merely a movement to garner votes. It is a movement aimed at changing the nature of State power itself. It is a movement which aims to replace the present bourgeois parliamentary democracy by a Hindu Rashtra. What is this Hindu Rashtra? What will it mean for the mass of Hindus in India? The following editorial takes a critical look at Nepal — the only Hindu Rashtra which then existed in the world. It was written in April 1990, when many in India were enchanted by the Sangh Parivar's utopia of a Hindu Rashtra without comprehending what such a Rashtra has actually meant for the common people.

THE world's **only** Hindu Rashtra — the Hindu kingdom of Nepal, is under siege. Not under the onslaught of a foreign invasion or infiltration, not through the intrigues of a palace or a military coup, but under the might and force of its own people's upsurge and upheaval. In just over 30 days, the 30-year-old autocratic and despotic Hindu Raja's absolute power and that of his ruling clique of yes-men has been shaken to its foundations, starkly revealing once again how little time it takes to sweep away the "all-powerful", once the people awake and arise.

The Hindu Raja, reigning over the world's only Hindu Rashtra, like a 20th century Pharaoh or Caesar, denying the people such basic and fundamental rights like the freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of assembly and association, the right to form political parties and trade unions, the rule of law and an impartial and independent judiciary, has now been compelled by his subjects to bow before their will and to accept democracy. This Raja who is venerated as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who could not dare be criticised, let alone condemned, who could pretend to be above society and above the people, has been brought down to earth and made accountable and answerable to the people.

But it is not only for this historic victory of democracy over autocracy that the people of Nepal must be commended. We in India must be eternally grateful to them for exposing and revealing to us **how the most bloodstained dictatorship and despotism against the people was unleashed in the name of a Hindu Rashtra**. It is thanks to the Nepali people's brave and courageous struggle that the shroud of secrecy and censorship which veiled that hated dictatorship was ripped apart, and we now know how the Hindu Rashtra was really just a mask — a mask to hide the loot and plunder, the oppression and exploitation by a few Hindu families over the vast masses of Hindu people.

Ram Rajya for whom?

The *Hindutvawadis* in India day in and day out are chanting that a Hindu Rashtra means a Ram Rajya — a Raj of prosperity and happiness for the PRAJA — a Raj where the rulers will be at the service of the people. A Raj of

janakalyan and *janahit*, where the spirit of *dharma* and *sahakari*, *suraksha* and *samanta*, *shanti* and *shakti* will be vibrantly alive. We ask our Hindu brethren to take a close look at the only Hindu Rashtra in the world. Does it look like a Ram Rajya? Or is it a land of poverty and misery for the Hindu masses while being a *swarg* — a heaven of milk and honey for the Hindu classes?

Hindu Nepalis are amongst the second poorest people of the earth. For millions of unemployed, hungry and homeless Hindus in Nepal, everyday life is grinding poverty, mounting inflation, growing corruption, and extreme destitution and deprivation. But not for all Nepalis. For the few Hindu Nepali twice-born, life is glittering hotels, restaurants and casinos, exotic bazaars and shops, stately buildings and palaces, Nissans and Toyotas, electronics and narcotics. A more enchanting and splendid Shangrila there never was for them, and their foreign friends who flock there for momentary *moksha* and *nirvana*. Yes for the idle rich of the world, the Hindu kingdom of Nepal has been an ideal haven for rest and relaxation, while for its own people it has meant brutal unemployment, forcing millions of Nepalis to leave behind their homes and homeland and trudge to India just for bread. There are as many as five million Nepalis working in various cities of India, especially as watchmen.

Hindu Rashtra — does it root out corruption?

Our *Hindutvawadis* in India never tire of telling us that a Hindu Rashtra will stamp out corruption and usher in value-based politics. For years they have been claiming to be the pure white lotuses blossoming in India's stagnant and filthy cesspool of corruption. Many people sickened with corruption and extortion, are taken in by this propaganda of "*swabhimaan* and *swachata*" and believe that religion will cleanse politics of its dirt and filth, and the magic wand of a Hindu Rashtra will usher in a clean public life. We ask such people to look at Nepal and see whether religion has purified the rich and exploiters of their corrupt habits, or whether religion has been used by them to mask their corruption.

The only Hindu Rashtra in the world has been one of the most corrupt regimes in the world. Even money collected as

aid and charity has resulted in kickbacks. For e.g., the Queen heads a Social Service Coordination Centre which has sole monopoly over the receipt and disbursement of vast foreign funds that come in the name of international aid — half a billion pounds or 350 million dollars a year. There is no public accountability of these funds whatsoever, and so a large part of these monies are creamed off into the private royal treasury. Similarly, the forests of Nepal have been recklessly plundered to fill the private royal coffers, even while this has resulted in deforestation and ecological degradation.

A Hindu Rashtra — does it protect women?

The self-styled defenders of Hinduism in India parade themselves as protectors of women, as defenders of their honour and integrity. The RSS preaches, "The womanhood of Bharat is the fountainhead of strength that fortifies, sustains, enlightens, elevates — nourishing the nation forever as the Mother Goddess."

But Nepal has shown us how the exploiters in fact and in deed degrade women and then **misuse religion to sanctify this degradation**. The Hindu kingdom of Nepal has been notorious for its system of devdasis, called *Brahmakumaris* — a system of prostitution, sanctioned and sanctified by religion. As a result, there are more than one lakh Hindu Nepali women selling their bodies in Indian brothels. In fact every year about 3,000 poor and destitute girls between the tender ages of 10 to 20 are dedicated as *Brahmakumaris* and then bought and sold by traffickers in the flesh trade for about 1,000 dollars a girl. These traffickers are none other than the panchayat pradhan panchas, local politicians and civic leaders — 'respectable, God-fearing' Hindus, all of them!

These girls are then brought and sold to brothels in Lucknow, Kanpur, Varanasi, Allahabad, Agra, Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, etc. where they are kept caged in rooms of 6 feet x 4 feet. They are confined without food and clothes in total claustrophobic seclusion, for days and weeks, during which they are subjected to beatings and burning with cigarette butts and rape, by pimps and touts, so that they become

ready-made for prostitution. And for the next 15 years they are forced to practice this trade by traffickers in India who buy and sell them amongst themselves for prices upto Rs. 25,000 a girl. Most Nepali girls are bought and sold like cattle in this way at least 10 times in the course of these years. Just walk down Bombay's notorious red-light area in Kamathipura. Today more than half the prostitutes there, i.e. more than 30,000, are Hindu Nepali girls and women 'imported' from the world's only Hindu Rashtra. Would they exclaim "*Garv se kaho hum Hindu hai?*"

Hindu Rashtra — dictatorship on whom?

Most of our *Hindutvawadis*, especially those in the BJP, pretend to be paragons of democracy and *swatantra*. The RSS which is working and striving for the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra in India, constantly proclaims how it opposed the draconian emergency inflicted by the Congress Party in 1975. But does a Hindu Rashtra respect and uphold the democratic rights and civil liberties of the working people? Let's again look at the only Hindu Rashtra in the world.

Nepal has glaringly shown how the exploiters and oppressors of the people in the name of a Hindu Rashtra unleashed a ferocious dictatorship in which there was no freedom of speech, no freedom of the press, no freedom of assembly and association, no freedom to strike and protest. For 30 years the Hindu Raja throttled the press through censorship, a ban on anti-government papers and the hounding of honest journalists. The electronic media became just "His Master's Voice". The most cold-blooded repression was unleashed on all freedom-loving and democratic-minded people, human rights activists and civil libertarians. The right to form political parties, the right of political dissent was crushed. In just six weeks more than 12,000 people were arrested, tortured and jailed by the military and police. The tortured and the damned included peasants and workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, bureaucrats, teachers, students, editors and journalists. A special mercenary force of young men called *Mandalis*, trained in judo and karate and other terror tactics by the Zionist Israeli government, were used to launch fas-

cist attacks against all those struggling for democracy. That the Hindu Rashtra of Nepal was bathed in the blood of its own Hindu people became evident especially when thousands of protestors demanding democracy were massacred by armed soldiers and even machine-gunned from helicopters. Besides, thousands of activists were pushed into open drains and kept there for three days and nights at a stretch, in the biting cold of February when the temperature fell to a freezing 0 – 15° celsius.

When 'Hindu Rashtrawadis' in India like the Shiv Sena talk of *thokshahi* (dictatorship), let us not be under the illusion that it will be a *thokshahi* on Muslims only. In the Hindu kingdom of Nepal, the *thokshahi* was inflicted on the mass of toiling Hindus, by a ruling coterie of Hindus.

To the committed RSS activist

We know there are committed activists in the RSS and other Hindu organisations who honestly believe that a Hindu Rashtra will solve the fundamental problems of our country and the people. Confronted with the degradation of Hinduism in Nepal, they may console themselves with the thought that the Indian version of a Hindu Rashtra will be humane and just in comparison with Nepal. We ask such activists to ponder for a moment. If Nepal was the castration of a Hindu Rashtra, then why did not our *Hindutvawadi* leaders in the RSS, the BJP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Shiv Sena, Hindu Mahasabha, condemn the horrors, the terrors and assaults going on in Nepal? Why did they not protest when thousands of unarmed, freedom-loving Hindus were butchered by the soldiers and police of the so-called *avatar* of Lord Vishnu? Why did our 'defenders and protectors of Hindus' who talk of "Hindu – Hindu bhai bhai" not set up Mukti Samitis and Suraksha Dals for the liberation of millions of their Hindu brethren from the clutches of despotism? Why did they not organize *jan-jagrans* or *prabhat pheris*, *satyagrahas* or *dharnas*, *dharmasabhas* and *balidan jathas*, *padyatras* or even *mahayagnas* in support of the democracy movement in Nepal? Our *Hindutvawadis* are chanting "*Jis Hindu ka khoon na khaule, khoon nahin woh pani hai* (those Hindus whose blood does not boil, have

water in their veins), to arouse the Hindu masses to break a masjid. Why did their blood not boil when the blood of Hindus flowed in the streets of Nepal?

It is a fact that all the so-called 'crusaders and champions' of Hinduism observed a *maun vrat* — a stony silence on the events in Nepal. On January 18, when the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front spearheading the democracy movement in Nepal, called a convention in Kathmandu, most of the political parties in India and around the world sent their representatives and issued statements of solidarity. Even pseudo democrats of the Congress Party attended the convention. But our 'pure democrats' of the BJP declined the invitation and even refused to send a message of solidarity. On the other hand, these same 'pure democrats' had attended the World Hindu Conference in strength, when it was convened in Kathmandu in 1988, where the Raja was even conferred the title of "Hindu Samrat." With whom then are our 'pure democrats' in solidarity? **The Hindu Raja or the Hindu Praja?**

Why the stony silence?


We know the excuse our 'pure democrats' in the BJP are peddling. They claim that they do not wish to interfere in the "internal affairs" of another state. How convenient this excuse of non-interference! But don't our *Hindutvawadis* claim that they believe in an *Akhand Bharatvarsha* which includes not just India, but also Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and also Nepal! Besides, had not our *Hindutvawadis* set up a Vishwa Hindu Parishad to look after the interests of Hindus world-wide? Do the atrocities on Hindus in Nepal today not concern this World Body? Or is it only concerned with atrocities committed on Hindus by the Moghul monarchs centuries ago?

We are not surprised at the mournful silence of our *Hindutvawadis* in India. We are not shocked at their support for this Raja masquerading as Lord Vishnu. After all, the former maharajas and maharanis of India who not only have all their wealth intact, but have multiplied it many times over in "Independent India", are also staunch *Hindutvawadis* and provide financial backing to the RSS, the VHP,

the BJP, etc. How then can these organisations, with patrons like Yuvraj Dr. Karan Singh of Kashmir, the Rajmata of Gwalior and Maharana Bhagwat Singh of Mewar, raise their voice against the Raja of Nepal?

But the experience of Nepal has demonstrated that the oppressors cannot eternally use the mask of religion to oppress the people. One day the people do arise. Today the Hindu Rashtra is under siege from the Hindu people themselves. It took the Nepali people 30 years to recognise the true face of a Hindu Rashtra. It cost them agonising suffering to recognise their friends from their enemies.

On the other hand, in India, many of our Hindu brethren are still under siege from the Hindu communalists. How long will it take them to break away from this siege?



Breaking only Masjid or breaking the country?

THE RSS-BJP-VHP have gone out of their way to assert that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement is a movement for the cultural renewal of the country, a movement for social reforms, a movement to strengthen the Hindu identity, a movement for national regeneration. So lofty is its agenda that its proponents declare that the movement is beyond all elections, parties and governments. The following editorial was published in October 1990, while Mr. Advani was on his Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in order to mobilise the masses for the first Kar Seva at the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site. The editorial written in the form of an open letter, challenges the claims of the Hindutvawadis and exposes their real designs.

**"You have the greatest religion which the world ever saw, and
you feed the masses with stuff and
nonsense. You have the perennial fountain flowing, and you give
them ditch- water."**

— Swami Vivekananda

WE write this open letter to all the Ram bhakts of our country because in the days to come their views and actions will not only affect the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue, but also determine and shape the future destiny of our country. We respect and defend the right of Ram bhakts to worship Ram, to build temples in his name and to propagate his message. But when politicians drag the name of Shri Ram into the political mire and that too in the name of venerating him, it is criminal to remain silent.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in a recent pamphlet *Ram Janmabhoomi Facts and Our Duty*, states that "political controversy about Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir is a creation of politicians. They would invent issues even when they do not exist." We fully agree. However, we charge the VHP leaders to be among the foremost of such politicians. For there is no controversy about the right of Hindus to build a Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir in Ayodhya. Politics entered when the VHP and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) **demand that an existing masjid be removed before any mandir was constructed.** Demanding and threatening to break down a masjid or any religious place, without the consent of that community is no longer a religious act but political action. When Mohammed of Ghazni razed temples to the ground, his acts were political not religious. When the Portuguese destroyed temples and built churches, their actions were not for the greater glory of God but for the greater glory of the king. When the VHP and the BJP seek to destroy a masjid and build a temple, it is not to glorify Shri Ram but they are motivated by the lust for power.

The question before every Ram bhakt is whether in **today's India we want to support such political actions.** Do we want to support and continue the legacy of Mohammed of Ghazni and the Portuguese? Do we think we can take our country forward by imitating destroyers and plunderers who have already been thrown into the dustbin of history? Or do we refuse to confine Sri Ram to a temple, for as Brahmadev said in the Ramayan, "Shri Ram is seen in all creatures, in all regions, in the mountains and rivers....."

If we want the latter, then we have to understand that the VHP leaders are not the normal run of the mill type of politicians who promise us *roti, kapada* and *makan* in order to grab our votes. The VHP leaders are a special brand of politicians who believe that their actions are above parties and governments. In the same pamphlet, the VHP claims that its campaign for the Ram Janmabhoomi temple is **"beyond all elections, parties and governments."**

This is how the VHP desperately tries to prove that its actions are lofty, noble and pristine, not motivated by petty considerations of winning electoral seats, not contaminated by party politics which in India has become synonymous with corruption, opportunism and deception. And yet is it not a fact that it is precisely petty considerations of winning electoral seats and degenerate opportunist politics that has contaminated the Ram Janmabhoomi question. The VHP may try to deceive us that Ram Janmabhoomi is beyond elections and parties. **But surely parties and politicians with their greedy ambitions do not think that Ram Janmabhoomi is beyond them.** Does the VHP expect Ram bhakts to forget how criminals like Khim Bahadur Thapa from the Shiv Sena, wanted by the police in hundreds of cases of murder and extortion, won elections by pretending to be a staunch supporter of Shri Ram? Does the VHP expect Ram bhakts to forget how BJP leaders in Madhya Pradesh having got elected after championing the cause of Shri Ram are busy helping private traders to get liquor licences? Does the VHP expect Ram bhakts to forget how in Gujarat, BJP politicians after capturing municipalities with Shri Ram's name on their lips have helped property

speculators, land-grabbers and anti-social elements to earn crores of rupees in profits? Is then not the VHP's claim that the Ram Janmabhoomi issue is beyond elections and parties a fraud?

The VHP states that Ram Janmabhoomi is "**beyond governments**" and hence it declares that it will refuse to abide by any Supreme Court judgment on this issue. This is not surprising. The Muslim fundamentalists have also claimed that their personal laws *viz.* the right to have four wives, to divorce at the bat of an eyelid, etc. are "beyond governments". The Khalistanis also claim, they have the right to stock weapons in the Golden Temple and that this right is "beyond governments". Thus when the VHP follows in the footsteps of the Muslim fundamentalists and the Khalistanis, is not its opposition to them merely a mock fight?

Yesterday's traitors, today's 'patriots'!

In order to cover up how its activities are disintegrating the country, the VHP has no scruples in using the holy name of Shri Ram. In its pamphlet it states, "Shri Ram is the binding glue of our Indianness....He is a great uniting factor." The conclusion they draw is that constructing the Ram Janmabhoomi where the masjid stands is "the problem of existence of India as Bharat."

We ask the VHP to once again study their history books. Then perhaps they will see how despite Shri Ram being a uniting factor, our country was **divided** for most of its history into hundreds of fragments by Hindu rajas and maharajas constantly plotting and bitterly fighting against each other for petty ambition. They will see how at every critical juncture of Indian history, despite Shri Ram being a great uniting factor, these rajas and maharajas aided and abetted foreign aggressors, be they the Moghuls, the Portuguese, or the British, to first gain a toehold, and then to gobble up the country. Even in 1947, these very rajas and maharajas agreed to join Bharat, not for patriotic reasons but only after Sardar Patel promised that all their wealth, palaces, jewels, lands, monies, etc. would remain intact in 'Free India'. Today, where are these rajas and maharajas?

The five permanent trustees of the VHP are all former rajas and rajmatas. These same rajas and others who sold the country to the British, who served them as loyal lackeys for decades and oppressed their subjects, mainly Hindus, are today preaching to us "Shri Ram is the binding glue of our Indianness....He is a great uniting factor!"

Take the case of Yuvraj Karan Singh, son of the former maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, and founder president of the VHP. The great grandfather of Karan Singh helped the British in their war against the Sikhs for which this traitor was gifted the entire Kashmir valley. In 1947, Hari Singh and Yuvraj Karan Singh refused point-blank to join the Indian Union and only did so after Pakistan-trained marauders invaded their kingdom and after the Yuvraj was promised widespread powers under section 370 of the constitution. And now, in 1990, we have the Karan Singhs in the VHP preaching to the Ram bhakts of this country that "Shri Ram is the binding glue of our Indianness. He is a great uniting factor." Is not all this a cruel joke on Shri Ram and Ram bhakts?

The VHP states in its pamphlet that "those who divided India in 1947 are regrouping under different banners like the Babri Masjid Action Committee." True. But now what about those who wanted India to remain fragmented under the rajas, taking shelter behind the VHP?

Yesterday's casteists, today's 'social reformers'!

The VHP in order to hide its divisive past, pretends that their campaign for the Janmabhoomi is also a campaign for social reform. In its pamphlet it states with pride, "Another equally important achievement in this reconstruction is the declaration of untouchability as not being part of the Hindu religion by the Dharmacharyas. This is a great religious revolution."

Note, 40 years after the Indian constitution banned untouchability, we are told that now the Dharmacharyas have declared untouchability as not being a part of the Hindu religion. Are we to conclude from this that before this declaration, untouchability was a part of the Hindu religion? If so, then what about the perpetrators of this ghastly crime

who fragmented Hindu society, and continue to do so in spite of "Ram being a great uniting factor", despite "Sri Ram being the binding glue of our Indianness?" Is it not a fact that the leadership of the VHP consists of precisely these perpetrators who are now preaching to us about the unity of the Hindu Samaj?

The VHP tells us with glowing pride of how they stooped to conquer the untouchables. In its document it patronisingly boasts "the shilanyas was done with the blessings of all acharyas at the hands of one so-called 'untouchable'." Was it love and repentance that prompted the VHP to bestow the one so-called 'untouchable' the privilege of doing the shilanyas? Or was the VHP primarily interested in using the harijans and girijans to do the dirty fighting for them, in short, to become the cannon fodder of the police and CRPF while 'liberating' the Babri Masjid?

The VHP pamphlet itself gives its motives away. It proudly proclaims that "the protection of the (shilanyas) site was done by *vanavasis*, thus bringing all strands of Hindu society together."

The VHP poses as a great benefactor of harijans and girijans, although it very well knows that there are hundreds of temples in the country where the harijans and girijans are still denied entry. How come it only speaks of 'liberating' the Ram Janmasthan from the Muslims, and does not even squeak about liberating these temples from the stranglehold of the upper castes?

Which heritage do we uphold?

The VHP and the BJP claim to be the inheritors of our ancient and rich cultural heritage. Yes, we believe our country has a glorious, ancient and rich cultural heritage, important for us today because we can learn from it and strengthen the character of our people. We believe that the Ramayan and Mahabharat are not just religious books, but cultural treasures which every Indian, whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or Parsi should value and be proud of. But the question the VHP or the BJP refuses to address themselves to, is what elements of our heritage should we uphold today, and what elements we should renounce. They speak of a

"composite culture" forgetting that our heritage consists of precisely a **struggle** between the good and evil, the reactionary and the progressive.

The devdasi system where women were reduced to the position of temple prostitutes is part of our heritage, but a heritage which we should renounce. On the other hand, the social reform movement of Jyotiba Phule who fought for the rights of women and widows is also part of our heritage, a heritage we should uphold. Similarly, we uphold Yudhistir's sense of justice in awarding different punishments to different persons for the same crime.. A higher punishment to the Kshatriya who was a freer agent and hence more conscious when he committed a crime, and a lesser punishment to the Shudra who was less free and hence manipulated. On the other hand, we renounce Dronacharya's sense of justice in demanding the thumb of Eklavya because he had learnt an art only reserved for kings and princes. Duryodhan's order to strip Draupadi is also part of our heritage, but which we should never imitate, while Lord Krishna's protection of Draupadi should make every Indian proud. Similarly, the destruction of temples by Muslim plunderers and Christian colonialists, the plunder of temples by even Hindu rulers, the forcible conversion of Shaivaite temples into Vaishnavaite, and vice versa, or the conversion of Buddhist temples into Hindu temples is also part of our heritage. But should we uphold this heritage? Or should we uphold the heritage of thousands of common Hindus who protected Muslims in communal riots instigated by the British? **By talking of a "composite culture", the VHP and the BJP deliberately blur the contradictory nature of our heritage.** And no wonder. Their actions show what they uphold — the progressive or the reactionary, the good or the evil.

Strengthening which Hindu identity?

The VHP and the BJP claim that they are involved in the historic task of "strengthening the Hindu identity which is necessary to strengthen our national identity and self-respect." We ask the VHP and BJP leaders: Have you

strengthened our Hindu identity or have you made a mockery of it?

When our *Hindutvawadis* and their henchmen play the most vulgar filmi songs from Ganpati pandals, gamble and drink around the pandals at night, is it strengthening our Hindu identity or making a mockery of it? When Hindu festivals like Navratri are slowly being taken over by anti-social elements, when these festivals are becoming the battleground for rival gangs of *Hindutvawadis*, is our Hindu identity being strengthened or weakened? When every Hindu festival has been commercialised by the traders, when the rich celebrate these festivals through a vulgar display of money, while the children of the Hindu poor can only stare and weep, is our Hindu identity being strengthened? When barbaric customs like *sati* are being revived and leaders from the BJP and the VHP are in the forefront defending them, is our Hindu identity being strengthened or desecrated? When Mr. L.K. Advani is weighed in human blood and this blood is offered to him by the ABVP, is our Hindu identity being strengthened, or is it being given the most barbaric and ugly form?

In fact, the only way the VHP and the BJP have strengthened "our Hindu identity" is by turning a blind eye to the depredations of the traders and the anti-social elements who have taken over our festivals and made a mockery of our customs. The only way they have nourished "our Hindu identity" is by skillfully choosing symbols and programmes deliberately meant to provoke the Muslims. The Ram Janmabhoomi is useful for them not because of their love for a temple, but because for them **"Hindu identity" can be strengthened only through Muslim reaction.** We ask all Ram bhakts to ponder over this mockery of our Hindu identity which supposedly can only strengthen itself by making the Muslim community a target of attack.

In fact, though the VHP and the BJP fulminate against Islam, yet they are precisely attempting to imitate Islamic fundamentalism. Like Islamic fundamentalism, they are attempting to be militant, aggressive, dogmatic, puritanical, intolerant and chauvinistic. Do we need a Hindu identity

that imitates the worst characteristics of Islamic culture which many Muslims themselves are ashamed of?

The less said about the VHP's and the BJP's claim of developing our self-respect the better. When lakhs of Hindus are daily forced to carry human excreta on their heads in our towns, the VHP and the BJP do not protest against this insult to our self-respect! When thousands of our Hindu sisters are abducted from villages and forced into the flesh trade (most of them from the Hindu kingdom of Nepal) our VHP and BJP leaders are tongue-tied at this mutilation of our self-respect! When barbaric rituals like child sacrifice are condoned as part of our "composite culture", there is not one word of protest against this insult to humanity! When little children (most of them Hindus) are forced to live by scavenging in dustbins, battling with dogs and crows for a piece of rotten *chapatti*, our self-respect is not supposed to be degraded! According to the VHP and the BJP our self-respect is degraded today by the mere presence of masjids built hundreds of years ago after supposedly demolishing temples. And the VHP's and BJP's recipe for restoring our self-respect is simple. Their recipe is **"attack the self-respect of another community and restore our self-respect."** Abuse the Muslims as anti-national, and develop our self-respect and the "Hindu psyche". The question is whether Ram bhakts should ever agree to such a castration of our self-respect?

The ugly face of nationalism!

But the trump card of the VHP and the BJP has always been their claims to nationalism and democracy. The VHP pamphlet says, "Ram Janmabhoomi is therefore the issue of sustaining and strengthening the integrity of Indian nationalism and democracy." In another place it remarks that October 30, 1990, "will not be a day only of annual *Maha Ekadashi* or *Devathan Ekadashi*, but a day of national resurgence and reassertion of national identity." Even today it is the BJP's claim of being "the party of nationalism and national unity", in the midst of secessionist movements in the Punjab, Kashmir and Assam, that is the source of its attraction to even the liberal intelligentsia. Hence, merely

dubbing the BJP as communal, as sections of the Left have hitherto done, cannot and will not expose the real face of its nationalism. Let's examine its nationalism.

Mr. L.K. Advani has time and again stated that the BJP is against a theocratic State. In *India Today* (October 15, 1990) he declares, "I reject theocracy."

Well Mr. Advani, we know this is only to fool the liberal Hindu intelligentsia whose modern mind has no stomach for theocracy. You do not expect us to forget that top leaders of the BJP like Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia, are leading lights of the VHP which openly preaches theocracy. You yourself have recently expressed how the BJP regards the VHP as its own organisation, and yet you expect us to believe that you are opposed to theocracy! Don't you know that BJP member of Parliament, Ms. Uma Bharati, declaimed at the Hardwar Sant Sammelan that **"if Muslims are to live in India, it will be at the mercy of Hindus."** Now, Mr. Advani, surely you know this is no statement of a secularist, but of a die-hard, unrepentant theocrat. How different is it from the statements of the Muslim fundamentalists in Pakistan who declare that "if Hindus are to live in Pakistan, it will be at the mercy of Muslims?" Is it not clear that **the nationalism you flaunt is another form of Muhammed Ali Jinnah's nationalism which partitioned our country** and created the Islamic Republic of Pakistan? And you know Mr. Advani, where Jinnah's nationalism took Pakistan? **It began with being anti-Hindu, and ended up with being anti-Muslim!** Jinnah's nationalism just did not make Hindus and other minorities second-class citizens in Pakistan. It made huge sections of the Muslim population, third-class citizens. It is for this reason that East Pakistan broke off from West Pakistan after its Muslim population suffered one of the most brutal genocides in human history. Even today, Jinnah's nationalistic Pakistan is at war with itself, with the Muslim Sindhis fighting the Muslim Mohajirs, the Muslim Punjabis fighting the Muslim Sindhis, and the Muslim Paktoons battling it out with the remaining Muslims of the country. There is no civil society in Pakistan. It is a society disintegrating through civil war and drug-trafficking, and has only been kept together through force,

violence and continuous military dictatorship. You Mr. Advani, as a refugee from Pakistan should know that it all began with the dictum, "if Hindus are too live in Pakistan, it will be at the mercy of the Muslims."

Is only Islamic theocracy, fascist?

We know that our 'champions of Hinduism' steeped in prejudice against all Muslims will quickly retort, "the Pakistani example only proves that Muslims are genetically butchers, they will kill their own brothers and even rape their sisters. In India, the Hindu ethos will not permit it. In India the Hindu Rashtra will mean the flowering and regeneration of the Hindu consciousness." Or perhaps they will be sophisticated like Mr. Advani and reply, "Hindu Rashtra is not theocracy. The State has always been deemed a civil institution. Theocracy is alien to Indian tradition and history." Well, 'champions of Hinduism', stop fooling yourselves and the people. Your claim that your Hindu Rashtra will be fundamentally different from an Islamic raj because "the Hindu is different from the Muslim" is a fraud. Have you forgotten what took place in the only Hindu Rashtra of the world — the Hindu kingdom of Nepal? Well, we will remind you as your memory of history is so selective. For decades in Nepal (regarded as part of Akhand Bharat by the RSS) the Hindu raja claiming to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu brutally suppressed all the democratic rights of his Hindu subjects, denying them the freedom to speak, to write, to assemble, to organise, the right to form political parties and trade unions, etc.

Prominent Hindu writers from Nepal have exposed how this 'Hindu Rashtra' was one of the most corrupt regimes in the world, where even money collected as aid and charity resulted in kickbacks for the rulers. It is no secret that this 'Hindu Rashtra' reduced the Nepalese to become the second-poorest people on earth, and as a result today there are more than one lakh Hindu Nepalese women selling their bodies in Indian brothels — most of these women being devdasis. Should we remind our 'Hindu rashtravadis' in India, that their counterparts in Nepal let loose on their own Hindu people a most ferocious dictatorship where people were jailed

without trial for years on end, where shooting people at sight was routine, where thousands of dissident Hindu workers, peasants, doctors, writers, nurses, lawyers, teachers, students, journalists, etc. were tortured for daring to oppose this demonic rashtra? Must we remind our 'Hindu rashtravadis' how anti-social elements called *mandalis*, were trained in terror tactics by the Zionist Israeli government and used to launch fascist attacks against all democrats? Must we remind them that in the struggle for democracy this year, thousands of protesters were massacred by armed soldiers and even machined-gunned from helicopters, while thousands of activists were pushed into open drains and kept there for three days and nights at a stretch, in the biting cold of February when the temperature fell to a freezing zero degrees Celsius?

A foretaste of the Hindu Rashtra

Yes 'rashtravadis', **the only Hindu Rashtra in the world ended up killing Hindus, just as the Islamic raj in Pakistan ended up killing Muslims.** The Hindu fascist is no different from the Muslim fascist, for as you yourself say, they both belong to the same *Akhand Bharat*.

Now please don't protest that our fears are unfounded and our criticisms harsh. When without your raj at Delhi, your goons can create havoc at the public meetings of the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh who is a Hindu, we shudder to think of what you will do when and if you come to power in Delhi. You may justify your conscience by calling Mulayam Singh Yadav a maulana, but can we forget that on four occasions the VHP attempted to kill the chief priest of the Ram Janmasthan, Swami Laldas, because he opposed their plans to demolish the masjid? Because he symbolised the true spirit of Hinduism and declared that we cannot honour Ram by desecrating another religious shrine. Will you also call this head priest who daily performs puja at the Ram Janambhoomi, a maulana? And can we forget how BJP goons shot at Mitrasen Yadav of the CPI, because **the people of Ayodhya** had rejected the BJP- supported Congress(I) candidate who stood on the mandir manifesto, and

instead voted for the CPI during the Lok Sabha elections in November?

To those who still believe in the peaceful intentions of the BJP, we ask them to notice how the language of its leaders is getting more and more aggressive everyday. We ask them to notice how Mr. L.K. Advani receives offerings of hundreds of weapons daily from his supporters during the Rath Yatra. On October 10, 1990, BJP leader, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, who is accompanying the Rath Yatra, thundered at a public meeting in Indore in the presence of Mr. Advani, "there is no place for those who do not support the cause of Lord Ram in this country." Well Mr. Mahajan, there are millions of Hindus like the head priest of the Ram Janamasthan who support the cause of Lord Ram, and yet are opposed to your cause of forcibly desecrating a masjid. Does that mean there is no place for them in this country? And are the weapons you are collecting meant to bring them into line?

Today, those who do not support the VHP and the BJP have no place in this country. Tomorrow they will declare that all those who support Mandal have no place in this country. Have we already not noticed how Chagan Bhujbal from the Shiv Sena who supported reservations was forced to recant in public by the diktat of his party supremo? Have we already not noticed the venom with which the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* has attacked reservations, calling it "**daylight robbery**" and branding its chief promoter, Mr. V.P. Singh as a "**terrorist in the highest office of the land?**" When it comes to using the harijans, the girijans and the backward castes to fight the Muslims, it is "backward castes zindabad!" But when it comes to reservations for them, *Organiser* screams "it is robbing Peter to pay Paul."

The contempt for Paul, who really is the one who has been robbed for centuries, is not surprising. The BJP has already shown the poor and toiling people of Madhya Pradesh the ugly face of its nationalism and given them a foretaste of its Hindu Rashtra. *India Today* (July 31, 1990) reports, that in a span of a few months "thousands of hutments have been demolished, most BJP-administered towns look like war zones. Touring the state, Union Finance Minister, Madhu Dandavate described the devastation as worse

than Turkman Gate." It won't do to forget that while our rashtravadis are ranting and raving about demolishing the Babri Masjid, they have already succeeded in demolishing and destroying thousands of homes, most of them belonging to Hindus.

Who supports this ugly form of nationalism?

Who then will benefit from this ugly form of nationalism peddled by the BJP and the VHP which spits venom on Muslims and minorities, which believes in eliminating all Hindus opposed to its policy of hate, which cynically manipulates dalits, adivasis and the backward castes in its communal game, which is ruthless and merciless to the poor and toiling people? Yes, who will support this ugly face of nationalism which not only supported the crimes of the Hindu Rashtra of Nepal, but also talks of forming a federation, or co-federation, with the fascist butchers in Islamabad? Yes, who will support this ugly form of nationalism that is not just against Muslims and minorities, but also Hindus — in a word against 90 per cent of our people?

Yes, the property speculators and property sharks wanting to clear slum land through communal riots, the big builders and landlords thrilled at the bulldozer raj in Madhya Pradesh, the big Hindu traders interested in getting rid of their rivals and their shops through communal conflagration will support this ugly face of nationalism and wish it spreads through every corner of the country.

But today this ugly face of nationalism has also other big backers **who represent the most ugly face of big business in India.** We are talking of big backers like the Hinduja, who swindled the exchequer of crores of rupees through commissions and kick-backs and whose dealings are being probed by the Janata Dal government. We are talking of big backers like the Ambanis who are desperate, having lost control of L & T, which they had usurped, with support from the Rajiv government. We are talking of corporate raiders like the Chabrias whose 'sick companies' are under investigation by the Reserve Bank. We are talking of the Amitabh Bachans who are under income-tax scrutiny, and about whom preliminary income-tax inquiries have revealed

a concealed income of more than Rs. 3.2 crores from 1976 to 1987. This is the ugly face of big business which ruthlessly used the State machinery during Mr. Clean's raj to indulge in corporate raiding, to manipulate takeovers, divert financial institutions to serve their piracy, bend the law and servants of the law to escape customs duty, under-invoice exports and over-invoice imports to plunder the country. It is this ugly face of big business that is opposed to even a bourgeois democratic form of government and the continuation of the National Front government in particular, which could spell ruin for them.

To bring down this government by hook or by crook is the aim of this ugly form of big business, and to do this, the ugly form of nationalism of the BJP and VHP serves as its **willing handmaiden**. It was not for nothing that Amitabh Bachan sang and danced at Shiv Sena organised concerts, and it was not for nothing that the Ambanis supported the Shiv Sena-BJP during the elections to the Vidhan Sabha in Maharashtra.

The BJP brand the Congress Party and the Janata Dal as pseudo-secularists because they encourage minorityism and pamper the Shahi Imam Bukharis and the Banatwallas. Yes, their secularism is pseudo. But the secularism of the BJP is as pseudo, because they not only pamper the Thackerays and the Vikram Savarkars who habitually abuse the Muslims but they also serve the interests of the exploiters who are a **minority** within the Hindu samaj.

The latest recruits

However, their pseudo secularism and ugly nationalism have also recently won over a sizeable section of the Hindu liberal middle class, mostly belonging to the upper castes.

Enjoying all the modern goodies of life, this liberal intelligentsia is realising that the more he climbs the greasy ladder, the more is life getting insecure and anarchic around him. The road he travels in his Maruti are full of potholes, the aeroplane he flies could crash because of a terrorist bomb, his son may become a victim of drugs, while his daughter could run off and marry a boy from another caste or sect. Sitting in front of his colour Onida, he wails that


Punjab, Kashmir and Assam are burning, while his neighbour rings and informs him that the flat above him has been burgled. He curses V.P. Singh and B.P. Mandal, fulminates at Benazir Bhutto and Saddam Hussein, sneers at the performance of the Indian team at the ASIAD, and nearly suffers a stroke when he realises his son cannot get admission into medical college. When finally he hears the sound of crackers exploding as a Pakistani batsman hits the winning four, even his liberal exterior cracks. All his venom pours out on the Muslims. He dreams of a 'Hindu resurgence' that will resurrect his dying spirits. Even Balasaheb Thackeray begins to make sense. Military dictatorship is no more a bad word, but becomes respectable. The BJP is no more communal, but a party of principles, the only party that can give him stability, self-pride and a national identity.

We cannot and neither aspire to teach or convince such liberals whom the BJP has won over. Life itself will teach them. All we would like to tell their children is that the stability their parents are searching for is a mirage. Making Muslims a target of attack will not produce for us a renaissance, but fascism. **A fascism that will end up by devouring its own children.** Make no mistake about where the VHP's and the BJP's nationalism will take us and our country. It will unleash the most violent fratricidal war in Indian history, in comparison with which the Mahabharat will pale into insignificance. It will usher in a society that is constantly at war with itself, held to ransom by armed thugs and lumpens posing as *sainiks*.

A society in which thousands of our youth will be forced to become terrorists just in order to survive and save their self-respect. Every city and town will be converted into killing fields where only the law of the jungle will exist. No home will be secure, no woman will be able to fearlessly go out to work. No child returning home from school will be safe. Curfew will be routine, house to house searches by the military will become common. Imprisonment without trial will become a permanent feature of our political system, while fearless journalists and writers will be under twenty-

four hours threat. In short, there will be no civil society as we know it today.

Forty-three years ago, the Muslim League misusing the name of the Prophet, partitioned the country. In actual fact it only succeeded in partitioning the Muslims. Today, we fervently appeal to all Ram bhakts not to allow the BJP and the VHP to misuse the name of Shri Ram to divide the country again. They will only succeed in partitioning the Hindus.



What the rise of the BJP can teach the Left!

THE final goal of the Hindutvawadis is not parliamentary majorities. Their ultimate goal is to replace the present bourgeois democratic State machinery with a fascist-type State. What is the game plan of the Hindutvawadis to achieve this objective? How do they skillfully manipulate the cynicism of the masses to pose as an alternative to the centrist parties? How do the fascists seek to represent the interests of the most reactionary sections of the exploiter classes? What are the important lessons which the Left and Democratic forces have to learn in order to build an anti-fascist movement? This editorial attempted to answer these questions in November 1990, when the Hindutvawadis displayed their massive mobilising powers for the first Kar Seva in Ayodhya, despite Mulayam Singh's use of the State machinery against them. The lessons drawn then, have become even more important for the anti-fascist movement today.

OCTOBER 30, 1990, will be engraved in letters of gold for the Hindu fundamentalists. As their historians have written, "the day on which the forces of *Hindutva* stood up to the might of the Indian State." October 30, will also be a watershed for those fighting against fundamentalism and fascism. Not because Mulayam Singh's police 'protected' the Babri Masjid. Not because the Indian State deftly diffused a volatile situation with a minimum of casualties, as our editors in the bourgeois press have editorialised. But because October 30 has crucial lessons which we can ignore only at the cost of peril. Because October 30 showed in a flash the type of 21st Century that is planned for us. Because October 30 laid bare the entire game plan of the Hindu fundamentalists, which huge sections of the Left and Democratic forces are foolishly ignoring even today.

First let's analyse the game plan, then peep into the future that is being planned and finally what lessons we have to learn *now* if history has not to label us collaborators and deserters.

The first aim of the game plan

A number of Hindus have been mesmerised into believing that the VHP-RSS-BJP combine really wants to build a Ram Mandir. However, more dangerous and disarming is the mind set crystallising among secular people that the real intention of this combine is to demolish the Babri Masjid. Building a mandir is as low a priority for this combine as demolishing the masjid. We believe the VHP's joint general secretary, Acharya Giriraj Kishore when he told newsmen on November 20, that "had we desired to demolish the mosque, we could have easily done that."

Let's have no illusion. No State however powerful can prevent for long a band of committed fanatics from blowing up a religious shrine. The game plan of the VHP-RSS-BJP combine is not blowing up the shrine but something more dangerous. Its aim is to mobilise on an unheard of scale, Hindus, irrespective of caste and sect and hence its slogan of building a Shriram Mandir. Its aim is to neutralise, disarm and win over to its hegemony and diktat, sections of Muslims and liberal Hindus and hence its 'offer' of

honourably shifting the masjid. But most important, **its aim is to fanaticize and communalise this mobilised mass** and hence its threat of forcibly breaking the masjid as a last resort. Creating a fanaticized and communalised mass is primary, demolishing the masjid is secondary. This is the first point to remember in order to understand their game plan.

The mass programme of sending shilanyas (consecrated bricks) from every village of India to Ayodhya in 1989, the mass programme of distributing bottles of Ganga *jal* some years ago, the mass programme of taking out Ram jyoths this Divali, the rath yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya and the gigantic mobilisation for Kar seva in October and now the distribution of the ashes of the Kar sevaks killed, to the four corners of the country, are means to achieve the same end, *viz.* to create a fanaticized and communalised mass base. Those who still parrot that the aim of the Hindu fundamentalists is to break the masjid are disarming the public, as they are unable to comprehend how the fascists are **creating a mass base of support for themselves.**

The second aim of the game plan

The second aim of the game plan is to use the mandir-Masjid issue to disintegrate from within the State machinery, to polarise it along communal lines and to **fanaticize a major section of this State machinery.** And to carry out this subversion, former top bureaucrats and police officers like S.C. Dixit—former DIG police and today vice-president of the VHP—were in charge of field operations.

Observe the open call of the VHP to the police and paramilitary forces to mutiny. Observe the power of their slogans directed towards the police. "*Santon ka ab yeh ailan/kar seva ab karen jawan*" (Saints have now given the call, Kar seva will be done by the jawan) and "*yeh andar ki bath hai/police hamare saath hai*" (It's a secret, the police too are with us). Remember how top leaders like Ashok Singhal smuggled themselves into Ayodhya with the help of top bureaucrats and RSS sympathisers who had penetrated even into the former PM's office. Remember how some of the police overwhelmed by the religious euphoria, joined the Kar

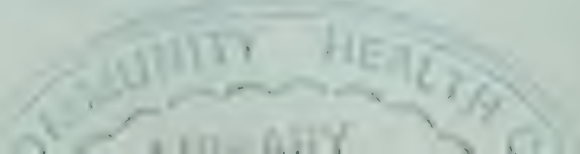
sevaks in shouting "*Ram lala hum ayen hai*" (Ram Lala we have come). Remember how sevaks embraced security personnel and the latter put tilak on their foreheads and deserted their posts. Remember how the Kar sevaks in Ayodhya were getting instructions through a transmitter in Delhi, which is only possible with the compliance of the top echelons of the State machinery. Remember how in many places, Kar sevaks taken into custody were allowed to roam freely about the town.

October 30, was the most brazen attempt to fanaticize the State machinery, to split it with the pressure of the fanaticized masses from below. The most calculating plan to create a contradiction in the police between their public duty and their religious beliefs. The most audacious plan to isolate and disillusion officers and police who are opposed to fanaticism. The most ruthless plan to create hatred among the fanaticized mass against such secular elements in the State machinery.

The third aim of the game plan

The third aim of the game plan was to **recruit from among the fanaticized mass, the most militant and aggressive elements for armed training.** Ayodhya was the perfect gigantic recruitment centre to ascertain through practice, who are the most qualified for this mission. The gearing of the State machinery to stop the Kar sevaks served as a practical test to identify those with courage, endurance, persistence, and dare devilry. According to newspaper reports, the Bajrang Dal has announced the recruitment of one million youth for armed training. Obviously former police officers and military personnel committed to Hindutvawadi organisations will be in charge of training. Already all this muscle power and pent-up anger is being directed against organisations and individuals standing up to the fundamentalists. E.g. A few days after Oct. 30, the Janata Dal office in Bombay was burnt down. On November 15, activists of the *Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi* were attacked and forcibly stopped from distributing leaflets, by elements claiming to be *Hindutvawadis*. On November 16, a parent was attacked in his house for complaining to the principal

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against a teacher who was selling VHP stickers to children in the school. On November 19, Suhasini Ali, MP, belonging to the CPM was heckled and abused by aggressive BJP members at a public meeting. If this is the situation in metropolitan Bombay, the situation in the towns and districts can well be imagined. And this is just a glimpse of the future!

The ultimate objective of this game plan?

Many among the Left and Democratic forces have been content with repeating ad nauseum what Congress and Janata Dal leaders daily parrot: "The *Hindutvawadis* are using religion to come to power." "The BJP used the rath yatra and its lotus symbol in order to win the next elections." "The BJP wants votes in the name of the mandir," etc, etc. These glib statements are disarming, for they cover up the ultimate objective of the game plan. The ultimate objective is not merely winning votes or elections. **The final goal is not parliamentary majorities. The ultimate objective is to violently replace the present bourgeois 'democratic' State machinery with a fascist State machinery.** The fanaticized and communalised masses, the disintegration and polarisation of the State machinery from within, the creation of armed fascist groups are means to bring about the violent transformation of the State machinery.

Those who repeat by rote that the RSS-VHP-BJP combine merely wants votes, we urge them to wake up. This combine is not satisfied with the *type* of political power enjoyed by the Congress Party, Janata Dal, Left Front, regional parties, till now. It is not primarily interested in ruling through a bourgeois 'democratic' State machinery. It refuses to be constrained by High court judges who declare null and void an election result because the candidate used religion to garner votes. It refuses to tolerate police officers who refuse to support and protect their communal henchmen during riots. It refuses to be hemmed in by the handful of democratic rights enjoyed by the people till now. In short, it wants to rule with the help of a fascist State machinery.

This fascisization of the State machinery will mean the hounding and purging of all bureaucrats, police officers,

judges, collectors and other government officials who are opposed to the fascists. It will mean the open collaboration of the fascisized police and the armed fascist lumpen elements. The armed fascist lumpens will be provided full support and protection to violently suppress all political activity opposing fascism and communalism. Public meetings and demonstrations which expose the fascists will be violently disrupted. Journalists and writers who oppose the fascists will be harassed, intimidated and even eliminated. Newspapers and magazines will be subjected to mass censorship. Teachers and professors who stand by secular values will be silenced. The mass media especially TV and radio will be shamelessly used to build up mass hysteria on communal issues. Hit lists of activists belonging to secular, Left and Democratic parties, trade unions, student organisations, women's and peasant organisations will be drawn up. Imprisonment without trial of progressive and secular forces and jail beatings and torture will become the order of the day while lumpen fascist elements will be provided bail for the asking. The chapter on Fundamental Rights will be thrown into the dustbin and with it all lawyers and constitutionalists who think they can fight fascism with the help of the constitution and case law. And while the fascist mobs rule the streets and cow down the population through terror, the fascisized police and armed forces will be given a free hand to violently suppress resistance that will build up and snowball in different pockets of the country. It is not for nothing that top BJP leaders have openly eulogised Adolf Hitler and are proud to be the inheritors of his legacy!

Converting cynicism into support for fascism

One of the strongest points of the fascist fundamentalist leadership in India is their perceptive understanding that the masses are getting disillusioned with the existing bourgeois 'democratic' State machinery and are sickened with the present, fraudulent parliamentary democracy. Today, there is overall cynicism about elected leaders who have feathered their own nests after getting into Parliament, the vidhan sabhas and ministerial positions. Vast sections of the population have lost faith in the courts to provide even a semblance

of justice. More and more people do not trust the police and other para military forces to protect their homes and livelihoods. Elections which are supposed to represent the will of the people have degenerated to represent the will of the money-bags and the muscle-power of the booth snatchers. **It is this disillusionment and alienation of the people from the present bourgeois 'democratic' State machinery which the fascists are skillfully harnessing to win over the people and to pave the ground for fascism.**

Thus when the BJP-VHP scoff at the idea of the courts resolving the temple-masjid issue, it makes sense to a lot of people. When the VHP tells the Muslims that it is not the State machinery but only the goodwill of the Hindus which can protect them, it begins to strike a chord. When the propagandists of the RSS preach that the State machinery is at the beck and call of the minorities (e.g. flying Hajis to Mecca-Medina etc.) the millions of poor and toiling Hindus who are daily kicked by the State begin to nod their heads. In all this, the direction is unmistakable. Increase cynicism so that the people refuse to defend the present bourgeois 'democratic' system. Convert cynicism against the State machinery into support for the fundamentalists. The more the people say "India needs a dictatorship", "What's the use of elections", "All politicians are crooks", the easier for the fascist hordes to take over.

Fascists pose as democrats

But the fascists are past masters in not only political tactics but also mass psychology. They know that when the masses loosely talk of dictatorship, they are in effect hungering for a real democracy that serves their interests. They know that when the people curse politicians, they are searching for a leadership with vision and a mission; a leadership willing to suffer and sacrifice for principles and a cause. They know that when the masses are disillusioned with elections, they are in actual fact thirsting for a democracy in which the people control the leaders and not vice versa. The fascists have shrewdly understood all this and hence in India we are witnessing the ultimate irony. **The irony that in the**

political arena the fascists are posing as the crusaders of a new democracy, the epitome of principles and values, the harbingers of a new dawn for the country.

Observe how during the past month, while every parliamentary party including the Left were saving governments, cobbling new opportunist alliances through horse trading and defections, the BJP was the only parliamentary party who at the very outset called for fresh elections, *viz.* to let the people decide. Observe how while the people were sickened with the open auction of MPs in Delhi, and the castration of all democratic norms by 'democrats', the VHP has announced a mass campaign for the recall of MPs. Observe how it was only the BJP which denounced the repressive measures used by the State against the Kar sevaks. Observe how Mr. L.K. Advani has gone out of his way to cultivate the image that it is only the BJP which has principles and that its leaders are not willing to sacrifice principles for political expediency. Observe the propaganda of the RSS-VHP-BJP combine that democracy is the rule of the majority and since Hindus are the majority, their sentiments have to be honoured.

In Punjab and Kashmir too, the fascists are pretending to be crusaders of democracy. Observe how in Punjab and Kashmir, the Khalistanis and the Muslim fundamentalists have called for a people's referendum to decide the future of their states, while our 'secularists and democrats' have shown no faith in the wisdom of the people and instead have relied only on the armed forces to protect the unity and integrity of the country. We cannot fight fascism today unless we understand how the fascists are winning over the masses by pretending to fight the battle for democracy.

Disintegrating the centrists

Of special attention to the fascists are the national centrist parties (e.g. Congress, Janata Dal) who are committed at least till now to preserve, even in a distorted form, the existing bourgeois 'democratic' State machinery. If this State machinery has to be made fascist, all parties swearing by it have to be disintegrated or sidelined, very much as the centrist National Conference has been sidelined by the Mus-

lim fundamentalists in Kashmir and the Akali Dal has been sidelined by the Khalistanis. Although the fascists have succeeded in fanaticizing a section of the masses, yet a larger section still follow the centrist parties as evident from electoral results. Besides, the centrist parties have a sizable number of activists who are opposed to the communalisation of politics. These activists have to be disillusioned and scattered if fascism has to succeed. **Hence disintegrating the centrist parties is high on the agenda of the fascists.** And it is here where the leaderships of the centrist parties are themselves helping the fascists to do their job.

Firstly, most of the leaders of the centrist parties who mouth secularist phrases have a track record in corruption and nepotism. They will stoop to any level to protect their positions of power and privilege. They therefore not only repulse the masses but are incapable of challenging the democratic pretensions of the fascists. Thus today, when the fascists are openly calling for elections, this leadership is saving 'secularism' through horse-trading, defections and opportunist alliances.

Secondly, the centrist leaderships have all been half hearted secularists which makes it child's play for the fascists to expose their "pseudo-secularism". All the centrist parties talk of separating politics from religion and yet they themselves have indulged in electoral alliances with those they have dubbed as communal, e.g. electoral alliance of the JD with the BJP and of the Congress Party with the Muslim League. Though the centrist parties speak of secularism and communal harmony, yet some of its leaders are office bearers of the VHP or the Babri Masjid Action Committee. When in power, they have accepted the claims of these communal organisations to represent their respective communities and thus given these organisations recognition and respectability. The VHP and the BMAC command fear, awe and respect in their communities, because centrist governments themselves have been treating them with fear, awe and respect. The government itself has been acting as if the VHP represents the 60 crore Hindus of India and the BMAC represents the 9 crore Muslims of India.

Thus in the name of equal support to all religions, the centrist parties have been providing equal support to the fundamentalists of all religions. Is it not a fact that the centrist parties when in power have poured crores of rupees in grants to public trusts controlled by the communalists and provided them land, tax exemptions, and patronage to run schools, dispensaries, charities, ambulance services, etc.? Is it not a fact that all this government patronage has helped the communalists to increase their stranglehold over their respective communities? Is it not a fact that this policy has enabled the fundamentalists to hide what support they receive; to instead only highlight what their rivals receive and thus to instigate people that their community is being discriminated, while others are being appeased?

To the centrist leaderships, secularism has become a game of balancing different fundamentalist interests. Thus during Congress rule, the Muslim fundamentalists got the Shah Bano judgment upturned, while the VHP-RSS were allowed to hold the shilanyas at the disputed site. During Janata Dal rule, the VHP was allowed to escape with tax evasion, while the birthday of the Prophet was declared a holiday in order to please the Muslims.

The Mandir-Masjid issue is of special importance to the fascists because it is an issue which makes it impossible for the centrist parties to appease all. It provides full scope to expose the "pseudo secularism" of the centrist parties who try to walk a tight rope balancing one fundamentalist interest against another. Rajiv Gandhi tried it and the *Hindutvawadis* say with pride that his government fell in 1989. V.P. Singh also tried to do it and met the same fate 11 months later. And now Chandrashekhar will have the same sword hanging over his head.

The third reason which makes it easy for the fundamentalists to disintegrate and isolate the centrists is because all centrist parties, in crisis situations refuse to organise and arm the secular masses to fight the fascists. Instead when the appeasement of communal leaders fails, they rely finally on the repressive State machinery, (which is infiltrated by the fundamentalists) to protect secularism. State repression strengthens fundamentalism as it is the masses and not the

fundamentalist leaders who bear the direct brunt of this repression and thus get isolated from the government and the ruling centrist parties.

Liberalisation gives rise to fascism!

One of the important factors seized by the fascists in recent years to consolidate their position has been the intense rivalry between the big monopoly capitalists. Today it is an open secret that the monopoly capitalist class, which up to 1984 was by and large with the Congress Party, is split between the Congress Party and the Janata Dal. Rajiv's liberalisation programme unleashed the most bitter and ferocious corporate wars in Indian history, with the neo-monopolists like the Ambanis ruthlessly stamping out the older monopolists, by using government support and Congress patronage to corner licences, reduce taxation on their inputs and goods, import machinery without customs duties, subvert financial institutions, grab government orders, swallow rival corporate giants, break all the laws of the land, buy up sections of the bureaucracy and the press, etc. This ruthless cut-throat competition among the monopolists led to a split in the Congress Party when Mr. V.P. Singh, who opposed these corporate raiders was summarily expelled from the party.

The coming to power of V.P. Singh in December 1989, saw rival groups of monopolists ranged behind the Congress Party and the Janata Dal. The fascist fundamentalist forces especially the BJP have skillfully used this contradiction among the monopolists to discredit the centrist leaderships and to strengthen their own position. It is no secret that Ambani and his cohorts supported the BJP rath yatra to discredit the National Front government and finally to break it. It is no secret that this ugly face of big business pumped in crores of rupees to the Chandrashekhar faction to buy off MPs to defect from the Janata Dal. Tomorrow if necessary, this ugly face of big business would be ever prepared to support fascism, if it can give them 'stability' and a free hand to do just what they want.

When L.K. Advani constantly reiterates that a Hindu Rashtra is not a theocratic State, he is in fact desperately reassuring these 'captains of industry' that it will not be the

sants and shankaracharyas or the fanatic leaders of the Bajrang Dal who will control the Planning Commission, the Reserve bank, the financial institutions and the top echelons of the State machinery. With great foresight, the fascists know that their game plan is doomed to failure unless they can get the most reactionary sections of the monopoly capitalist class to support them. With inflation reaching the skies; with the foreign debt crossing more than Rs. 100,000 crores; with crushing taxation the only solution our slavish experts can suggest; with the fuel crisis threatening a general dislocation of industry, forcing millions into unemployment; with every possibility of a share market crash pauperising lakhs of small, middle-class investors, a section of the monopoly capitalist class will increasingly find a fascist State which crushes any mass struggle, more attractive and tempting than the present unstable bourgeois 'democratic' system.

October 30 — Warning to the Left!

The onward march of fascism will first and foremost brutally crush the Left and Democratic forces. We can fight back and turn the tide even now, if we learn the lessons which history is desperately trying to teach us.

Firstly, the Left have to stop being vociferous defenders of the present bourgeois 'democratic' State machinery. Today a sizable section of the Left is second to none in peddling the illusion that the police and armed forces can defend secularism and the unity and integrity of the people, that the courts can give justice to the workers, peasants and other toiling people, that Parliament really represents the will of the people, that bourgeois elections decide who will be the real representatives of the people, that the development of the masses is possible with the help of the present corrupt bureaucracy.

This fraudulent defence of the pillars of the present State must stop. Such defence allows the fascists the initiative to rant and rave against the State machinery and to win over the masses. **The fascists are opposed to this State machinery because they cannot tolerate even the few democratic rights it promises. We are opposed to this**

State machinery because its democracy is formal and not real. It is not the people who control this State machinery. It is the State machinery which controls and subjugates the people, especially the toiling people in millions of ways.. Today the masses are sickened of this State machinery and when the Left attempts to cover up its septic sores, the masses are sickened of the Left.

Tailing will lead to isolation

Secondly the Left should stop protecting, defending and tailing the centrist parties. It's a fact that the Left parties were more vociferous in defending the V.P. Singh government in Parliament than even his own ministers. The fascists are hell bent on using the treachery and pseudo secularism of the centrist leaderships in order to disintegrate these parties. The Left cannot save the centrist leaderships from digging their own graves. If the Left tails and defends the centrist parties, they too will be disintegrated along with them, as tailism **prevents the Left from carving out its own independent identity in the minds of the masses.** The fascists have created a clear cut political identity by sharpening their differences with the centrist parties. The Left too can only come across as an independent political force by demarcating themselves from the centrists. To do this, the Left must mercilessly expose the half hearted secularism of the centrist leaderships, publicly identify centrist leaders who hob-nob with communal organisations, expose how the ruling centrist parties appease fundamentalist organisations and public trusts controlled by the communalists of all religions, denounce the policy of the centrist leaderships of giving recognition and respectability to communal organisations.

One of the reasons for the parliamentary Left tailing the centrists is because the centrist parties command numbers and crowds. A ridiculous belief that tailing the centrists will consolidate the Left in the Hindi heartland. It is this mythical belief in numbers, the fear that an independent political line developed in opposition to the centrists will lead to the isolation of the Left from these numbers, that is used to justify this tailism. In actual fact as the masses get

disillusioned with the centrist parties, they are attracted to the fascists and not the Left, because it is the fascists who have developed an independent political identity by sharpening their differences with the centrists. The tailist Left which is scared of being isolated from the centrist parties ends up by being isolated from the masses. Therefore the need of the hour is for the Left to develop an independent political identity and it can do so today by mercilessly exposing the capitulation and collaboration of the centrist leaderships with the fascists. It is only this independent political identity that can win over the secular rank and file of the centrist parties who are disillusioned and directionless.

Thirdly, the Left especially the parliamentary Left must stop deceiving themselves and others that the present bourgeois 'democratic' State machinery can stop the fascists from taking over. The parliamentary Left have a superstitious faith that the constitution and parliamentary institutions will not allow the fascists to do just what they want. This is sheer self-deception. The fascists can, not only castrate the constitution and the chapter on Fundamental Rights, but can even line up enough constitutionalists and Supreme Court judges to defend their actions. The fascists can, not only twist and turn parliamentary institutions around their fingers, but also prop up many of the centrist leaders to help them in this task.

Least of all can the repressive organs of the State machinery stop the fascists from taking over. Even the secular elements in the police, para-military forces and military are helpless and cannot in the final analysis defend secularism or even the unity and integrity of the people and the country.

The fascists thugs can only be stopped by the secular masses who are 90 per cent of the population. **They can be stopped if the most militant sections of the secular masses are organised, trained and armed to deal with the fascists, blow for blow.** The secular elements in the State machinery can only help the armed masses, they cannot replace them. Today the fascists have private *senas* armed to the teeth and have even penetrated the police and

the para-military forces. In Punjab and Kashmir, they receive arms and arms training from the Pakistani State. This killing machine can only be stopped in its tracks by the armed people.

Fourthly, the Left have to expose the democratic pretensions of the fascists. We cannot surrender the platform of democracy to them. We cannot allow them to take the initiative of posing as democrats. We have to show by words and especially our deeds that we have faith in the masses. We have to be in the forefront to support each and every democratic demand of the people, especially all those demands and aspirations which are beyond the present bourgeois 'democratic' framework. Only if we fight the battle for democracy can we really expose the face of fascism.

Winning the battle of ideas

Fifthly, the Left have to give the most important priority to combat the lies, the prejudices and the half truths of the fundamentalists. The fundamentalists are strong today because they have half won the battle of ideas, because they have convinced even reasonable people that their outlook is correct, because they claim to represent the forces of patriotism today. We cannot surrender to the fundamentalists in the battle of ideas, in their sordid game of distorting history and accentuating communal prejudices. We cannot allow them to parade unchallenged as defenders of religion and their communities. It is our duty to show how the fundamentalists make a mockery of religion and how they primarily oppress and repress the people of their own community.

Today the fascists claim that their ideas represent militant nationalism and that this nationalism is the key to all the ills and problems facing the nation today. The Left has miserably underestimated the irresistible attraction of militant nationalism, cloaked in religious symbolism, when secessionism, terrorism, Bofors, defections, corruption, drugs, gang wars, etc have become keywords of our political vocabulary, when the country is suffering not only from an economic and political crisis, but also a crisis of ethics and character. The Left has ignored the power of this militant

nationalism and has been content in dubbing the fascists as communal. It has restricted its propaganda to preaching to the masses humanism and brotherhood. In actual fact, since the masses by and large live in harmony and brotherhood, this empty and condescending preaching is no answer to militant nationalism. The Left can only win the battle of ideas if it begins to expose and attack the ideology of militant nationalism itself. We have to mercilessly expose how this militant nationalism serves the most rabid exploiters of the people, how it will unleash the most savage attacks on the toiling people. We have to expose how this militant Hitlerian nationalism cannot solve the economic and political crisis; expose how it is whipped up by the agents of the exploiter classes, so that the economic and political crisis does not lead to a liberating political awakening, so that any and every mass revolt is ruthlessly crushed by a fascist State and its thugs. The parliamentary Left is mortally afraid of being dubbed anti-national and unpatriotic and hence its morbid fear and impotence in opposing head-on, militant nationalism.

We cannot win the minds and hearts of the masses unless we show at every step how militant nationalism is the enemy of the people, unless we vigorously counterpose the militant nationalism of the fascists with the internationalism of the working class.

Anti-fascist united front

Finally the need of the hour is to build an anti-fascist united front which will carry out the above tasks.


Today if any force can take on the fascists, it is only the Left and Democratic forces, the hundreds of thousands of honest activists struggling alongside workers, dalits, tribals, landless, peasants, slumdweller, women, students, etc. But these forces are miserably split, splintered and scattered in hundreds of organisations, each vying with the other for domination, each one suspicious of the other, content with ploughing a lonely furrow in their own mountain strongholds, some of them viewing the masses as their private jagirs, desperately trying to isolate them from the views of the other Left organisations. In fact some sections of the Left

are more enthusiastic in uniting with the JD or even the Congress, than in uniting and working with other sections of the Left. On the other hand, the fundamentalists like the RSS, BJP, VHP, SS, Bajrang Dal, etc., although having differences are united in their common tasks.

The Left and Democratic forces must work hard to end this shameless sectarian legacy. We have to work hard towards building a strong anti-fascist united front in which all the Left and Democratic forces can be united — a front in which all organisations will be allowed to carry out their political propaganda within and outside the front while being united on a common programme. **Any form of sectarianism which restricts the free flow of views and propaganda is the greatest threat to Left and Democratic unity.** It should be opposed tooth and nail.

The time has come not to sink differences but to work in spite of them; not to allow differences to disintegrate the movement, but to use them to learn from each other and spur the movement forward.

These are the tasks that urgently beckon us. Let us not be found wanting.



How we have the 'movement' but the fascists have the women!

WOMEN are the worst sufferers of communal riots and the breakdown of civil life. And yet the fascists have made deep inroads among women. What is the reason for this? Why has the feminist movement been unable to contain the fascisation of women? The thought-provoking paper reproduced here raises these important questions. This paper was brought out by Stree Jagruti Samiti on the occasion of the Fourth National Conference on the Women's Movement in India held in Calicut, Kerala from December 28-31 1990. It was published at a time when on the one hand, large parts of the country were being consumed by communal conflagration with women being their first and worst targets, while ironically on the other hand, the Hindutvawadis were attempting a mass scale mobilisation of women for their cause.

“IT is a time to listen to the different resonances of women in song, in folk tales, in grandmother's stories, in symbols; a time to create new spaces, to seek new knowledge, to find new possibilities for our times.”

So said the invitation to the Fourth National Conference on "The Women's Movement in India," to hundreds of women activists across the length and breadth of this country. But even more loud and clear from more than a thousand audio and video cassettes around the country can be heard this shrill and hysterical shriek of a woman:

"Declare without hesitation that this is a Hindu Rashtra, a nation of Hindus.....We have come out to strengthen the immense Hindu Shakti into a fist..... Do not display any love. This is the order of Ram..... The Koran exhorts them to lie in wait for idol worshippers, to skin them alive, to stuff them in animal skins and torture them until they ask for forgiveness..... Let there be a conflagration than this slow torturous simmering.....We could not teach them with words, now let us teach them with kicks.....Let there be a bloodshed once and for all.....Now we will not only shed our own blood, but the blood of others too.....That Mahatma Gandhi led you to ruin.....Tie up your religiosity and kindness into a bundle and throw it in the Jamuna maiya.....Any non-Hindu who lives here does so at our mercy....."

Ominous and blood-thirsty words these; and that too from the mouth of a woman — Uma Bharati, elected to the highest body of the land — Parliament. And she is not the only woman spewing communal, nay fascist hate and poison amongst the people today. There's Sadhvi Ritambhara who has come out of her ashram and vowed not to rest content till a Hindu Rashtra is established. Listen to what she says:

"We want to teach the Muslims a lesson — either they come to heel and surrender to our will in Ayodhya, or we shall take it by force..... We don't believe in this kind of secularism....."

WHICH ARE THE TIMES IN WHICH WE WOMEN ACTIVISTS FROM ALL OVER INDIA ARE MEETING TODAY? Those of the invitation or those of Uma Bharati,

Vijayaraje Scindia and Sadhvi Ritambhara? Will these fascist women permit the crores of women of our country to quietly listen **"to the different resonances of women in song?"** Or is it increasingly going to be the 'fate' of our women to hear only the wails of bitter anguish as their homes are looted or burnt down, or the screams of outrage as a husband or infant is stabbed to death?

And folk tales — will it be tales from the *Panchatantra* or the *Jatakas*, or now will it only be sinister and gory tales of "how Babar destroyed a mandir to build a masjid, how the Muslims demanded Partition and Pakistan and got it, how the Sikhs and Kashmiris are all terrorists and butchers, etc., etc."

And as for grandmothers' stories, will they be like those of yesteryear, full of the milk of human kindness, about repentance even if an ant is killed underfoot, about the teachings of our great Indian sages, saints and saints, who down the years taught the people of their times, as well as future generations to show care and concern for the wretched of the earth? Or will grandmothers and mothers now teach their sons and grandsons only about revenge and how they must avenge the murder and slaying of their near and dear ones, the cruel destruction of their hearts and hearths, and the crushing underfoot of their lives and livelihoods?

And symbols — will they continue to be of women's life-giving and life-sustaining *Shakti*, of her destructive powers over evil and wrongdoing symbolised in Kali, of her deep knowledge of life and society symbolised in Saraswati? Or are today's symbols increasingly going to be bricks and jyots, trishuls and swords, acid bulbs and AK 47s!

"A time to create new spaces....." Where, one might well ask? Where will the women victims of Gonda and Baroda, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad, Agra and Aligarh, Chandigarh and Srinagar and of innumerable other towns and cities too shameful to enumerate, **create new spaces?** In burnt-out *bastis* and strife-torn *mohallas*? In makeshift refugee camps or disease-filled migrant colonies?

"We must find new possibilities for our times....." What new possibilities are there for women caught in the throes of a fundamentalist mania that has engulfed entire towns and cities, talukas and districts, making them simmering cauldrons that can be ignited and set aflame at the slightest rumour or whisper!

We have been asked **"to express our ideas and experiences, feelings and problems through a cultural medium of our choice."** To express ourselves through **"songs, skits, plays, paintings, tableaux,"** etc. Honestly, can we really sing and dance with gay abandon and joy while a ghastly death dance is being enacted all around us? Do we wish to enter the footnotes of history as women who fiddled while India burnt?

Not just fundamentalism, but fascism!

Perhaps some of the feminists gathered here will dismiss our views as alarmist. Perhaps to them all talk of fascism is an unnecessary phobia. So simple to dismiss the present communal conflagration as just another bout of riots which have regularly erupted in our country since 1947. So easy to make believe that sooner or later the riots will be quelled and the women's movement left in peace and quiet to discuss patriarchy in the home, sexual stereotypes in the mass media and how women should regain control over their bodies. So simple to satisfy our feminist consciences by just ritualistically having a sub-theme in the National Conference on the "topic" of religious fundamentalism, in which we plod through the same old groove of personal laws and Shah Bano, Roop Kanwar and *sati*, when the country is threatened with not merely fundamentalism but fascism.

Let's wake up. Fascism is a million times more rapacious and bestial than fundamentalism. Fundamentalism mobilises the people of its own community 'to defend religion' from the 'interference' of our half-hearted secular State. Fascism is a ferocious mass movement which aims to make fundamentalism the State power itself. Fundamentalism primarily stifles working and toiling women. Fascism will not spare even 'liberated' and 'emancipated' women of the bourgeois and petit bourgeois class.

Kashmir is already in the control of Muslim fascists, who are not merely fundamentalists. These fascists are beyond caring whether section 125 of the Cr.P.C. goes against the Shariat or not. They are fighting for secession and an Islamic State joined to Pakistan. The Khalistanis in Punjab are already a State within a State dictating their own codes of conduct especially for women, while the Hindu fascists have made it clear that their aim is a Hindu Rashtra. This cataclysmic transformation of our present half-hearted 'secular and democratic' State to theocracy and fascism has already unleashed the most rabid criminalisation and militarisation of social life. *Senas* of armed thugs control every city and town. Their fascist attacks have been defended even by educated sections of society as "teaching those anti-national Muslims a lesson." Huge parts of the country are under military rule, with its house-to-house raids, its inevitable rounding up of innocents, imprisonment without trial, and torture.

This growing fascism has in a flash exposed how the so-called gains of the women's movement have indeed been built on sandy foundations. It has brought to the fore as never before, the inherent inability of the women's movement as we know it today, to deal with the monster of fascism.

Of what relevance today?

Of what relevance today are workshops on "women and the national planning policy" to the millions of Kashmiri women who are being kept within the Indian nation only at the point of a gun? Can the most stringent tightening of rape laws help when women are gang-raped during a communal holocaust or while under military occupation? Do the much-trumpeted family courts set up to 'sympathetically deal' with marital disputes, have any chance in front of the Khalsa courts of the Khalistanis? What property rights can we talk of for women whose families have lost whatever little belongings they possessed in communal riots or terrorist violence? Is it not a joke to exhort women "to unite and reclaim the night" when fascist lumpen elements control the towns after sundown? Can our preoccupation with how daughters and

mothers eat last and least, have any meaning when entire families are being pushed into semi-starvation and destitution due to week-long curfews and bandhs; when traders make use of the breakdown of all civil life to hoard, black-market and sell onions for Rs. 40 a kg, never mind other foodstuffs and foodgrains? Can our talk of women having rights in the matrimonial home or in the ancestral property, have any meaning when they have lost hearth and home and are rotting in refugee camps?

Some feminists have taken patriarchy to such absurd levels by claiming "Men kill. Women give birth!" "Man you are brute!" What meaning and direction can such anti-male chauvinism give us in such troubled times, when fanatic sad-havis are exhorting people to kill and plunder their non-Hindu neighbours! When the majority who have fallen victims to the bullets of the fundamentalists happen to be men struggling against fascism! For 40 years, our feminist sisters have boldly proclaimed, "Sisterhood is powerful!" Can we talk of any sisterhood with the likes of Uma Bharati and Ritambhara and thousands of other fanatic women who teach and preach hatred, revenge and aggression!

And yet, the most uncomfortable question forced by life on the women's movement today is: How come the fascists with all their backward views about women's inequality, with all their support for reactionary personal laws, succeeded in winning over millions of women to their cause? On the other hand, how come the women's movement, with all its opposition to reactionary personal laws, with all its progressive views about women's equality, is unable to break the stranglehold of the fascists on women? It is time to ask ourselves: **HOW COME THE FEMINISTS HAVE THE 'MOVEMENT', BUT THE FASCISTS HAVE THE WOMEN!** This question demands soul-searching from all of us, who believe that only an awakened womanhood can stand between democracy and fascism, between social peace and communal anarchy, between sanity and collective madness.

Can there be herstory without her concerns?

The first point to realise is that the women's movement has by and large refused to make the primary concerns of the majority of women its special concern. The majority of the women of our country are working and toiling women, homeless, landless and overworked — bordering between survival and death. Their primary concern has been that under 40 years of 'secular rule', their self-worth has been raped, their collective identity has been shattered, their self-respect has been destroyed, their dignity has been insulted, their will has been broken and their dreams and future torn to shreds.

When women lose their homes over and over again due to brutal evictions, what self-worth can she cling to? When she and her family are hunted like animals from one forest to another by corrupt forest officials, what is left of her pride? When she is forced to defecate on railway tracks and has to fight for even a bucket of water, what is left of her dignity? When she is constantly forced to fall at the feet of one labour contractor or another, when unscrupulous middlemen rob her of her hard-earned wages, when she is reduced to begging and pleading with vicious moneylenders, is there anything left of her will? When she has to bear up with the sexual assaults of the landlords, just in order to get work the next day, what is left of her self-respect? When landlessness and debt force her family to migrate to the city pavements, what is left of her collective identity? When she sees her tiny children working from dawn to dusk just in order to survive, when she sees her married daughters reduced to skin and bones by hard work and drudgery, is there any future to live for? When she sees her husband forced into unemployment and reduced to an alcoholic, what rainbow-like dreams are there for her?

Let's do some soul-searching!

Has not the women's movement by and large insulated itself from this collective degradation suffered by the overwhelming majority of women? Have not most women's organisations (exceptions granted) regarded mass evictions of slum dwellers and tribals from their homes as not "women's issues" but a housing question and hence of no

direct concern to the women's movement? Have not many in the women's movement (exceptions granted) consciously closed their eyes to the millions of families reduced to landlessness due to landlordism and money-lending, claiming these are not specifically "women's problems"? Has not the women's movement by and large failed to protest against the pernicious contract system which has strangled millions of women at work, including those involved in household industry — all under the plea that this is a trade union problem and does not concern the women's movement! Have not feminists time and again declared that adulteration and blackmarketeering of rations, denial of drinking water and toilets, extortion of donations for school admission, exorbitant costs of medical care, etc. etc. are not women's problems but "general problems"!

When the women's movement has by and large bypassed the overwhelming majority of women all these years, is it surprising that these women are bypassing the women's movement today? And can there be any real struggle against fascism, unless these women are organised and mobilised?

In fact by overlooking these women, the women's movement has left the field open for the fascists to play on the emotions and hopes of our women. Is it surprising then, that women are attracted to the fascists who constantly talk of restoring the pride of their respective communities, who boast of reclaiming back their lost dignity and identity, who magnetically draw their degraded unemployed sons and menfolk, especially their mothers with visions of a new future? Is it surprising then that the fascists appear as saviours of women when they forcibly close down liquor shops, gambling dens and cinema halls showing obscene films; when they promise jobs and small businesses to their sons by driving out the "outsiders" or getting rid of "the other community"? When our so-called secular State has robbed women not only of their meagre possessions but insulted and humiliated them, adding insult to injury, is there any reason for women to defend this 'democracy' from the clutches of the fascists?

An obsession that has led to regression!

The second point to realise is that the primary obsession of the women's movement has been the discrimination between the sexes — a burning and immediate question for women of the bourgeois and climbing middle class, but of marginal importance to the over-whelming mass of working and toiling women. The women's movement has been over-concerned with how daughters are given less food than sons in the homes of the poor, while the major concern of the woman of the house, has not been this discrimination, but how to feed her entire half-starving family. The women's movement has fought for property rights for women, but what relevance can this have for the millions of women who belong to the propertyless class? The women's movement has spoken of land *pattas* and house *pattas* for women alone, but to women who are landless and homeless, the *patta* itself is all-important, rather than whether she or her husband will be the owner. The women's movement has demanded that the matrimonial home should be in the name of the woman, but women living in the slums are less afraid of being thrown out by their husbands than by the government's demolition squads which make her whole family homeless. For the women's movement, the giving and taking of dowry is an insult to womanhood and a reflection of her unequal status, while for millions of poor and toiling women, the little gold and vessels given to her by her parents at marriage are the only form of security in the capitalist jungle. Many feminists view the matrimonial home, housework and even children as bondage. For the millions of poor and oppressed mothers, the home, however humble, is her identity and security, and her children more valuable than jewels.

It is this mechanical one-sided obsession with discrimination between the sexes, that has prevented the women's movement from being rooted in the lives and aspirations of the majority of the women of our country. No wonder these women are more attracted to the fundamentalists who talk of women as the *devi* of the home and the *shakti* of our society. Note how all the fascists have selectively appropriated our historical heritage and traditions to manipulate women for their own selfish ends. Unfortunately,

many in the women's movement have either ignored or looked with disdain at this "history of patriarchy"!

Keeping us politically backward!

This one-sided obsession with "discrimination between the sexes" has been one of the chief causes for keeping the women's movement socially introverted and politically backward. The burning problems of the women's movement have been primarily only those questions which directly and exclusively concern only women, such as rape, wife-beating, harmful family planning drugs, unequal ratio of women in the legislatures, judiciary and bureaucracy, etc., etc. Any questions which do not directly and exclusively affect only women are regarded as non-issues. The fact is that the most burning social and political problems of our day are considered to be "non-issues", on which the women's movement has been silent.

For example, fighting for reserved seats for women in elections is considered a "women's issue", but the mockery of democracy by muscle power and money power, the degradation of elections through bogus voting, mass bribery or terror, is not considered a women's issue! The women's movement gets overworked when Muslim fundamentalists in Kashmir force women to wear the *burkha*. It refuses to debate whether the unity and integrity of the country should be promoted at the point of a gun. The women's movement gets agitated when harmful family planning drugs like Depo Provera and Net-en are dumped by multinationals in the Indian market. However, how many women's organisations discuss, leave alone take a position on the huge foreign debt that is throttling our people!

The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy may not merit it being regarded as a 'feminist issue'. And yet can anyone deny that this 'non-issue' has drawn into its vortex millions of women!

Fascism is a highly developed ideology capable of winning over reasonable and even secular people. Can the women's movement combat this threat with its one-sided obsession with discrimination between the sexes — an outlook which

stunts the political development of women activists and makes them unable to face the fascist monster?

'Our gains' and the gains of the fascists!

True, this one-sided and mechanical preoccupation with discrimination between the sexes has won over to the women's movement, the daughters of the rich and yuppy class, who constantly find their upward mobility and freedom fettered by backward social practices and the male chauvinism of the ruling classes. However, while vigorously reflecting the heart burns and frustrations suffered by this class of women, how many are aware of how this gain for the women's movement has also been a gain for the fascists. How for every woman who fought for property rights with her brothers in court, the fundamentalists were also getting recruits who felt that "sisterhood was getting out of hand." How in most cases, the only property received by women was the court order, while the fundamentalists got the brothers. In short, have we realised how the fundamentalists have used our fetish for mechanical equality to precisely win over the most backward sections of the population (including women) under the guise that "secular" society is destroying the home and endangering our ancient culture, our religion, our tradition and our customs. Yes, our half-hearted 'secular and democratic' State has given us the 'liberty and freedom' to demand equality. But whenever and wherever we have wrested our rights, has it and can it protect 'our gains' from fascist reaction?

While we got the crumbs.....

This brings us to our third point. While our half-hearted secular and democratic State was giving feminists the liberty and freedom to demand equality, this same 'secular and democratic' State was also actively strengthening the fundamentalists within its own womb. This same State which gave a few women their 'liberation' also provided the fascists their licence and liberty. But while the women's movement got the crumbs, the fascists received the cake and the icing. Yes, while the women's movement received a handful of women's universities and women studies centres, the major

bulk of educational institutions, schools, colleges, institutes, polytechnics, etc., was given into the control of the fundamentalists of all hues — all of whom received large tracts of government land, generous State grants and liberal income-tax exemptions for this purpose. This control has not only helped them to mould the minds and hearts of the youth but has also enabled them to pose as benefactors of their communities. For example, the infamous Majlis-e-Itehadul-Mussalmeen (MIM), responsible for the present riots in Hyderabad, owns among other things, an ITI, a polytechnic, an engineering college, a medical college, an Institute for Islamic and Arabic studies, etc., all of which not only receive money from the Islamic fundamentalist regimes of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, but also from the Secular Democratic Republic of India. Even more widespread and pernicious has been the stranglehold of the RSS (indicted in several riots by government commissions) over education. The RSS runs more than 10,500 institutions and institutes all over the country, with again lavish grants from the Secular Democratic Republic of India.

While the State was in the few and far between times giving women activists of the 'autonomous women's movement' access to the government mass media like Door-darshan and AIR, especially on March 8, it was hourly opening up this mass media to the fundamentalists of all religions. Also note, how while the Jamáat-i-Islami, the Shiv Sena, the Khalistanis, the VHP, etc., have used the mass media in print and celluloid, audio and video, to spew their communal poison far and wide, the State has pretended to see no evil and hear no evil.

While our 'democratic and secular' State was attempting to set up a few family courts as token gestures of its 'concern for women in distress', it was giving full and free rein to the fundamentalist forces to set up their own Personal Law Boards, with legal sanction to decide in vital matters of family life such as marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody and guardianship of children, inheritance, etc. Further, these 'protectors of religion' were also being allowed to maintain a tight grip over their communities with the right to brutally excommunicate, boycott and ostracise all those who even

questioned, let alone opposed, their slavish *fatwas* and edicts.

We ask all women activists to look around them. Who runs more trusts meant for the welfare of women? Progressive women's organisations or fundamentalist organisations? Who runs more orphanages, ashrams, destitute homes, boardings for deprived children? Progressive women's groups or fundamentalist organisations? Who runs more clinics, dispensaries, ambulance services, hospitals? Progressive women or fundamentalist organisations? Who runs more hostels or homes for women? Progressive women's trusts or fundamentalists' trusts? Are we aware how many crores of rupees in government grants, tax exemptions, exemptions from Urban Land Ceiling Acts, have been provided by our 'secular and democratic' State to these fundamentalist organisations! Only then will we understand how the women's movement has received crumbs, while the fundamentalists have gobbled up the cake.

Our tragedy — grateful for the crumbs!

The tragedy is that the women's movement has by and large gratefully accepted these crumbs, believing that with a little bit of more petitioning and pressure, the crumbs will become morsels. Today leave aside getting more, the growing fascist forces are snatching even the crumbs from our mouths. E.g. in Chandigarh, Khalistani fascists are forcibly preventing college girls from even wearing clothes of their choice, while our 'secular and democratic' State watches helplessly.

The ones most grateful for these small mercies have been those who belong to the so-called 'autonomous women's movement'. We say so-called, because this movement has in fact been tied to the patronage and apron strings of this same 'democratic and secular' State. Instead of being autonomous of all political parties who swore by the merits of this 'secular and democratic' State, it has been miserably tied to their outlooks. Is it surprising then, that in a period of rising fascism when these 'secular and democratic' parties become irrelevant, like in Punjab and Kashmir, the 'autonomous women's movement' has become paralysed?

Let's be honest. Has not this talk of autonomy segregated the women's movement from any emerging revolutionary and democratic movement in the country? In short, has not the women's movement isolated itself from the very forces capable of taking on the fascists?

Why the exploiters need fascism!

Today the most reactionary sections of the exploiter classes do not have much use for even the facade of a 'secular and democratic' State which has served their purpose for 40 years. Today their interests can only be protected by a fascist party presiding over a repressive State machinery, purged of secular and democratic elements, and supported by fascist *senas* from the outside. Today, since the exploiter classes cannot even promise, let alone give, the basic necessities of life to the masses, they need fascist organisations which will constantly whip up fundamentalist frenzy and keep the masses divided and in a state of fanaticism. If this requires that entire regions of the country be under military rule, so be it.

Only through such a fascist 'stability' can the imperialists get their huge foreign debt serviced every year on the sweat and blood of the people. Only through such a 'stability' can the masters of the fascists get further loans to buy more guns and extort more commissions. Only through such fascist control can India compete internationally as the land of saints, and spiritualism as well as the source of the cheapest of cheap labour. Only through this brutalization, can our exports be made 'competitive' in international markets.

This drive for cheap labour will demand the dismantling of whatever meagre protective legislation exists for women. E.g. restrictions on night duty, working in underground mines, lifting heavy weights, etc. However, the fascists need not take the ignominy of this crime on their heads. Some feminists have already demanded the withdrawal of all protective legislation under the plea that this protection violates "gender equality" and affects women's employment.

Breakup of sisterhood!


The growth of fascism will increasingly break asunder the "oneness and unity of sisterhood" which has been an article of faith for many feminists. Leave aside the Uma Bharatis, many women especially from the growing middle class who have acquired the goodies of life can only be afraid of losing them, due to the growing insecurity and the anarchy of social and political life. It is not difficult for the fascists to sell them the need for a strong repressive State. Many women have been 'liberated' enough to own shares and play the stock market. Such women may even sneer at Advani's Toyota Yatra, during parties and social gatherings. But will they resist the appeal of the BJP which will more and more appear to them as the only party which can prevent a stock market crash?

There is no need to mourn the breaking down of this sisterhood. The anti-fascist women's movement can only be strengthened by such polarisation. In the days to come, this anti-fascist women's movement will attract all the best daughters of our land, who refuse to seek their liberation outside the emancipation of the millions of exploited and oppressed women of our country. Today such women activists are struggling alongside contract workers, Dalits, tribals, landless, homeless and other oppressed sections of the population. The growing forces of fascism will make it all the more necessary for them to be autonomous of State patronage and the outlook of the so-called secular and democratic parties like the Congress. It will make it necessary for them to be even more linked to the anti-fascist revolutionary movement. It is these women activists who will radically redefine the women's movement as India enters the turbulent 90s.

This anti-fascist women's movement will grow from strength to strength — despite repression, despite fascist attacks, despite momentary losses and despite temporary defeats. As the ugly face of fascism bares its fangs, this anti-fascist women's movement will receive the support and protection of millions of working and toiling women — simple women whom bourgeois feminists have often sneered.

or dismissed as "backward, reactionary, superstitious and religious."

The anti-fascist women's movement will give rise to its own irony. Its ranks may be depleted of many 'liberated, intellectual, secular, rational' feminists who may desert the movement, while women who religiously fast for their husbands or go on pilgrimages for a son, may in fact turn out to be its strongest allies.



Can the courts really stop the BJP - Shiv Sena?

ONE of the fondest hopes of our liberal intelligentsia has been the illusion that the Constitution and the courts can contain the fascists. The centrist parties, totally impotent to aggressively combat the ideological onslaught and mobilising prowess of the Hindutvawadis, have time and again also sought the refuge of the courts. This editorial published in May 1991, after the Bombay High court annulled the election victories of some BJP and Shiv Sena MLAs, warns of the danger in relying on the courts to stop the march of fascism. How correct this warning was, became clear on December 6, 1992, when inspite of assurances to the Supreme court, the BJP-RSS-VHP combine demolished the Babri Masjid in the very presence of an observer appointed by the Supreme Court!

TWO recent events have warmed the hearts of our liberal intelligentsia who worship the Indian Constitution and who of late have been spending sleepless nights at the rising spectre of communal forces. The first event is the Bombay High Court judgment annulling the election victory of Mr. Subhash Desai, the Shiv Sena MLA from Goregaon in north-west Bombay, because he solicited votes by inflaming communal passions and publicly threatened Muslim voters. Close on the heels of the Desai case, the elections of two other MLAs, Dr. Mundada of the BJP and Suryakant Mahadik of the Shiv Sena, were also declared null and void on the same grounds.

The second event has been the announcement by the election commission of a code of conduct which forbids communal propaganda. With this, the sigh of relief heaved by our intelligentsia was literally audible. After a long time here was solid evidence that the wheels of justice may grind slowly, but none the less they grind finally. Here was living proof that the majesty of the law and its handmaiden the State machinery would in the long run not only uphold secularism, but also protect and defend it.

Poor liberal intellectuals! The very events which have fuelled their hopes actually prove just the opposite — that communal fascists are being aided day and night by the State machinery itself. Let us take the Subhash Desai case.

A thousand crimes forgiven!

It has been proved in this case before the Bombay High Court that the Shiv Sena leader threatened Muslim voters. But our liberal intellectuals have forgotten that this crime does not merely warrant the cancellation of an election result. This crime is a grave offence under section 503 of the Indian Penal Code wherein the police has the duty of immediately arresting the offender, while the punishment under section 506 of the IPC for this crime is seven years imprisonment. Yet, to date neither has such an offence been registered against the guilty nor any arrest carried out. In fact, **the culprits are freely moving around the countryside like martyrs, campaigning for their parties in the coming elections.**

Similarly, it has been proved before the Bombay High Court that 2,365 bogus votes were cast and nearly 10,000 bogus voters registered. It has also been proved that these bogus voters could only have been registered due to the criminal 'negligence' of the election officials.

Assistant registration officer Dawoodbhai Peera (perhaps a specimen of the Shiv Sena's nationalist Muslim!) was sternly castigated by the court. Yet, no one has heard of even a departmental inquiry being conducted so far against this criminal 'negligence'.

Similarly, registration of bogus voters through false signatures is a serious offence under section 466 of the IPC, punishable by seven years imprisonment, making it mandatory for the police to arrest the offenders immediately. Yet, although this grave crime which made a mockery of the electoral process and the will of the people was proved before a High Court, **not a single accused has so far been arrested by the police.**

Similarly, it was proved before the High Court that Subhash Desai spread enmity between Hindus and Muslims, a crime under sections 153-A and 295-A of the IPC. Desai's election has been declared null and void, yet the police has made no move whatsoever to file criminal charges against him.

In short, what the Bombay High Court judgment proves is that the communalists are free to spread terror amongst the people and break the laws of the land with impunity, not only during elections, but also after elections and court convictions — all with the help and support of hundreds of officials in the police force and the bureaucracy.

Amidst all this, if a lone, solitary judge declares an election null and void, our liberal intelligentsia applauds loudly and rushes to give the State machinery a medal for being the defenders of secularism. This is only a case of the sighted being blind.

The election code of conduct is an even greater eye-opener and a hoax. What are the rules it states? "Do not spread communal disharmony. Do not solicit votes by stirring communal passions," etc, etc, etc. This now is truly amazing.

Under Indian law, spreading communal disharmony, stirring communal passions, deliberately hurting the religious sentiments of others, are all grave offences and taking action against those involved in these crimes is the responsibility of the police. When all these laws already exist, then why the need for a special code of conduct? Next we'll probably need the code of conduct to specify: "do not murder, do not rape and do not....!" All this clearly proves that all these laws are being openly flouted daily by the very political parties who swear by the code.

To top it all, a date has been declared for the implementation of the code of conduct. Are we to therefore presume that these political parties are free to commit the crimes mentioned in the code of conduct **up to the date of its implementation**? Can there be a hoax more cruel than this? When the government itself has indirectly admitted that the law of the land is meaningless, that the police does not implement the law, and that the communal fascists are free to do as they please, then do we need an astrologer to predict that even after the so-called date of implementation, the code of conduct will be relegated to the dustbin?

A thousand crimes abetted

For the past 40 years, the State machinery has been aiding the communal fascists not just during elections but at every step, and all with the blessings of the Congress Party. It is therefore no wonder that these communal fascists are today accusing the Congress Party of being pseudo-secularists. **In fact, without the help of the pseudo-secularists the phenomenal growth of the communal fascists would have been impossible.**

In these past 40 years, India has witnessed at least 5,000 brutal communal riots, replete with murder, rape, loot and arson. Scores of suspects were supposedly arrested during each riot. But to date, has anyone heard of a single national, state or district level leader being convicted for his role in a communal riot?

Scores of inquiry commissions have been set up after a riot. Many of these commissions have provided details of those who instigated the riots and proved the hand of the

various political parties involved. For instance, an inquiry commission proved that the RSS and Jamaat-i-Islami were involved in the 1978 Jamshedpur riots. Similarly, Justice D. P. Madon, who inquired into the 1970 Bhiwandi riots, prepared a whole list of those involved. The Commission held the poisonous propaganda of G. V. Behre, the late editor of *Sobat*, and editors of some Urdu periodicals responsible for inflaming communal passions. The Madon Commission also indicted communal organisations like the Shiv Sena and other Muslim communal organisations, and recommended that criminal cases be filed against the culprits. But successive Congress governments turned a blind eye to the report. Fourteen years later, these same parties indicted by the Madon Commission once again ignited a communal holocaust in Bhiwandi. It is this covert and overt support from the government that has not only strengthened the invincibility of these communal parties, but has also paved the grounds for their henchmen to spread mayhem and terror amongst the people.

The fascists have been helped not only by the police department, but by all government departments from the income-tax to the education department, from the charity commissioner's office to the archaeological department of India. The government has not only refused to file cases against the communal RSS, Jamat-i-Islami, etc, who have been indicted in riots by government commissions themselves, but in fact has given them full control over educational trusts, schools, colleges, hostels, ashrams, polytechnics, etc. all fully funded by State grants, so that communal poison can be forced down the throats of children and youth from a tender age. This is not all. Thousands of well known communal organisations and leaders have been allowed to consolidate their stranglehold over their respective communities through 'charitable and religious' trusts which have been gifted land, grants and tax relief by the State.

Whenever an upright officer has dared to oppose this policy, he has been punished. Last year for instance, when income-tax officer Vishwabandhu Gupta merely sent the Vishwa Hindu Parishad a notice pointing out discrepancies in their accounts, the then finance minister Madhu Dan-

davate transferred Gupta on another posting as a punishment. And this same Madhu Dandavate spares no opportunity to now hark on secularism!

In short, the enormous wealth that the communalists flaunt in every election — the wealth which can buy countless videos, audio cassettes, banners, posters, booths, raths and activists, is all due to their trusts and the tremendous government patronage these trusts receive.

Why this appeasement?

Why did the Congress Party aid the fascists? This policy was deliberately implemented to serve the economic and political interests the Congress Party represented. For four decades, it is they who used the communalists to crush the workers' movement and especially the communist movement. It is an open secret that former Congress chief minister of Maharashtra Vasantrao Naik helped in the foundation of the Shiv Sena and gave it total protection from the police, to crush the Communist Party of India and especially its unions amongst the mill workers. In the same way, it was former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who propped up Bhindranwale in order to marginalise the Akalis. Today it is the disciples of Bhindranwale who are crushing the struggles of poor Hindu and Sikh farm labourers in Punjab.

However, today these same fascists have got stuck in the throat of the Congress Party. Today the fascists threaten to swallow the Congress Party itself. That is why it and other centrist parties are pulling out statutes and codes of conduct from dusty shelves where they have lain for decades. They are now proclaiming that the "law must be implemented," and are the ones who are now running to the very State machinery which has helped the fascists all along, in order to try and save their own skins.

But the misfortune of the centrists like the Congress(I), is that though science may have made the impossible possible, yet even science cannot turn back the wheels of time and history. For the last 40 years the communalists have penetrated every nook and corner of the State machinery. Their people are placed in important positions in every department. The BJP's candidate list speaks for itself. It in-

cludes the former director-general of Uttar Pradesh police Shirish Chandra Dixit, former chairman of the censor board B.P. Singhal, former major-general A.N. Sikri, former High Court judge Justice Tiwari, and scores of other former chief secretaries and judges.

True, there are many honest and secular officials still in the State machinery even today. Nevertheless, the centrist parties are under an illusion if they believe they can combat the communalists through the State. Because when one official takes action against the communalists, **the other rushes to their rescue**. If the inspector takes action, the commissioner intervenes, if the home secretary acts, the judge rushes to their rescue, if the judge gives a judgment against the communalists, it will just not be implemented.

In short, the communal fascists have spread their tentacles so far and wide in the State machinery and wormed their way into 'respectable' and powerful positions in society, that the State machinery is totally incapable of taking a single decisive step against the fascists. Little wonder, therefore, that despite Justice Suresh's judgment in the Subhash Desai case, the police have not even filed criminal charges against the guilty.

Why is the State impotent to stop fascism?

We have no illusions about this State machinery. We know fully well that the State machinery which aids the fascists 364 days of the year will not oppose them on the 365th day, and if it does so, the opposition will be meaningless. On the contrary, the fascists skillfully use the court cases ~~filed~~ against them to attract public sympathy and entrench themselves even deeper. The Subhash Desai case has shown this clearly.

First : After the verdict, the fascists, who have not only spat on democratic principles and believe in *thokshahi*, have suddenly turned into champions of democracy. They have got a golden opportunity to exclaim in feigned innocence, "What sort of democracy is this, where we do not even have the freedom to speak and preach?" "What kind of secularism is this when in a country with a Hindu majority, we do not

even have the right to say "*Garv se kaho hum Hindu hain*" (Say with pride, we are Hindus).

Second : At a time when the masses have lost faith in the judiciary due to corruption in the judicial system, a defeat in court for the fascists is by no means a defeat for them **in the hearts of the people**. On the contrary, the fascists have publicly questioned the authority of a corrupt judiciary to sit in judgment over them.

Third : By giving maximum importance to the totally discredited State machinery in fighting the fascists, the centrist parties only help those whom they profess to oppose. Operation Bluestar may have killed Bhindranwale, but it certainly helped the terrorists to entrench themselves more firmly. Prabhakar Kunte may have won the legal battle against Dr. Ramesh Prabhoo, but Dr. Prabhoo got re-elected with an even bigger majority in the subsequent elections. Despite the heavy use of armed forces in Kashmir, the movement there could not be crushed. Instead, the more secular JKLF was weakened and organisations attached to the fascist and fanatic Jamaat-i-Islami grew in strength.


By trying to use the corrupt, oppressive and discredited State machinery to combat the fascists, the centrist parties allow the fascists to win over the only force which can really smash communalism — *viz.* the working and toiling people.

It is the duty of all secularists and democrats to concretely show the masses through their own experiences that communal parties, whether Hindu or Muslim or Sikh, never have and never will represent the working and toiling people of their respective communities. On the contrary, they represent only a handful of wealthy exploiters belonging to their community. There is no doubt whatsoever that sooner or later the masses will see through these marauders of religion!

We have no expectations that the centrist parties will ever expose the exploiter interests who misuse and abuse religion for their filthy ends. We have no expectations that the centrist parties will expose how the State machinery supports these exploiter interests. In fact, they will continue to pretend to fight the communal fascists, with the crutches of

the State machinery. For they have never had, and never will have faith in the masses. In fact, they have turned the other way when the fascists have terrorised the working and toiling people.

The question is whether the Left parties will also primarily depend on this oppressive State machinery to fight the fascists. If they do so, then history will rightfully say tomorrow, that they dug their own graves.



Can the Congress halt the advance of the BJP?

T HIS editorial was published on 26 June 1991, a few weeks after the Narasimha Rao government was sworn into power. It trenchantly analyses how the electoral arithmetic of parliamentary democracy is inexorably moving towards helping the fascists come to power, through elections. More importantly, it shows how the IMF-dictated policies will undermine not only parliamentary democracy but will create the economic basis for fascism. The article points out the trap in which the Parliamentary Left is caught in. How their parliamentarianism will inevitably smash their remaining electoral bases. It exposes how the sham anti-Congressism of the Parliamentary Left, as well as its sham anti-BJPism, is a fetter in the building of a revolutionary alternative to oppose fascism.

THE tenth Lok Sabha elections have brought our country to the crossroads. The results have been indecisive, and yet, the elections will go down as the most decisive one for India. The Congress Party has been denied a stable majority in Parliament, even after the unstable rule of the Janata Dals. The people have unsympathetically entrusted it to preside over a hung parliament, despite the sympathy wave caused by the brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

For nine Lok Sabha elections, it was primarily a contest between the Congress Party versus a sometimes divided, sometimes united opposition, with the Congress benefiting whenever and wherever there was a split in the opposition votes. The tenth Lok Sabha election was significant in that for the first time it was primarily a contest between the fascist BJP versus the centrist parties and Left parties. **For the first time it was the BJP which benefited out of the split in the votes of the centrist Congress(I) and the Janata Dals.**

In future, both these centrist parties especially the Janata Dal will be trapped in an insoluble contradiction. The more the Dal unites with the ruling Congress(I) to counteract the BJP, the more it will help the BJP to claim the role of THE OPPOSITION. On the other hand, the more it opposes the Congress(I) and consolidates its political and organisational position, the more will the BJP benefit from the rivalry between the centrist parties. In short, the electoral arithmetic of parliamentary democracy is inexorably moving towards helping the fascists come to power in the future, through elections.

The idealised dream of parliamentary democracy propounded by Mr. V.P. Singh, in which there will be a centrist ruling party and a centrist opposition party is impossible to realize. Any attempt by the JD to be a centrist opposition and **yet to keep alive** a centrist ruling Congress(I) can only help the BJP.

The choices before the centrists have already been determined by the existing economic and political situation. Either the JD smashes the Congress or vice-versa. Or the BJP will smash both of them!

The Right outstrips the Parliamentary Left

The tenth Lok Sabha elections have also been decisive for another important reason. For the first time it has also pushed the Parliamentary Left to the crossroads. For 40 years, the strategy and tactics of the Parliamentary Left has primarily been determined by electoral considerations, by the requirements of winning elections, financing them, wooing vote banks, working out electoral alliances, forming state governments and protecting such governments. The tenth Lok Sabha elections have dramatically shown where this electoral obsession has taken the Parliamentary Left, especially in comparison to the BJP.

The Left Front has lost the Assembly elections in Kerala and is slowly being reduced to a regional force. The BJP on the other hand today controls four important state governments and has emerged as an all-India alternative to the Congress Party. In this elections, the share of the Congress(I) in the popular vote has **fallen** by 11.6 percent since 1989, while that of the BJP has dramatically **increased** from 11.6 percent in 1989 to 20.31 percent in 1991.

This is the second time that the BJP has contested the elections on its own steam and the growth is palpable. In 1984, it received a paltry two seats when the sympathy wave after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination mauled it. In 1991, it has bagged as much as 119 seats despite the sympathy wave after Rajiv's assassination. The BJP has been successful in registering an all-India presence and has made deep inroads in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Orissa, Kerala etc. besides Gujarat and its traditional states. In West Bengal, while the Left Front's vote percentage has gone **down** by about 2 per cent, the BJP has emerged as a third force **increasing** its vote percentage from 1.59 per cent in 1989 to 15.98 per cent in 1991. In the industrial areas of the state, the Congress and the Left Front have ended up by conceding nearly 11 per cent of their votes to the BJP. As a Central Committee member of the CPM himself confessed, "the BJP has crept into our vote banks. We could not assess the potential danger just before the elections."

However, U.P. provides the best example to show how electoral politics has been completely impotent in establishing the Left in the Hindi heartland. Since nearly two decades the Parliamentary Left has been trying to make a dent in the Hindi heartland. The BJP on the other hand which had no electoral presence in U.P. five years ago, has grabbed the state assembly.

There are many among the Left who console themselves with the reverses suffered by the BJP in M.P, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, where the BJP has state governments. Let's not bury our heads in the sand. In these states, the BJP has not lost its electoral base. In M.P, the BJP increased its percentage of votes by as much as 2.3 percent since 1989 while in Rajasthan, it increased by 11.41 per cent.

In these BJP ruled states, the Congress(I) has won more seats because **it has nearly smashed the electoral base of the Janata Dal.** E.g. in Rajasthan, while the Congress increased its vote percentage by 7.13 per cent, the JD's share of the popular vote fell from 25.67 per cent in 1989 to 5.18 per cent in 1991—a drop of 19.86 per cent. In future, any recovery by the JD will inevitably help the BJP electorally, unless the JD completely smashes the Congress(I) and takes over its electoral base. But then, what would happen to Mr. V.P. Singh's idealised dream of parliamentary democracy!

Sham anti-Congressism exposed

But let's come back to the Parliamentary Left. The crisis it faces is not primarily connected with its electoral losses. **These losses did not create any fundamental crisis as long as the Parliamentary Left was assured that the ruling party remained a centrist party at the centre—a party at least committed to parliamentary democracy.** The tenth Lok Sabha elections have opened up the distinct possibility of the right-wing BJP coming to power at the centre in the next election—a right wing party which for tactical reasons swears by parliamentary democracy today, but whose organisational discipline, cadre-based structure and virulent *Hindutvawadi* ideology, gives it the capacity and power to replace parliamentary democracy by fascism tomorrow.

It is this development that has sent the leaders of the Parliamentary Left literally scurrying to mend fences with the centrist Congress Party. It is this development that has exposed to the rank and file of the Parliamentary Left, the sham anti-Congressism of their leaders—a sham anti-Congressism which has not helped the Parliamentary Left to replace the Congress Party, but instead has helped the fascist BJP to do so. Com. Namboodiripad's letter to the Congress(I) in the midst of the elections, was not an aberration. It was the logical culmination of this sham anti-Congressism practiced by the CPM leadership for 27 years. Now the rise of the BJP has made it impossible for this leadership to continue its sham anti-Congressism.

Please note, we call the anti-Congressism of the Parliamentary Left a sham, not merely because of its recent capitulation to the Congress Party. It was sham all these years, because while it was opposed to the Congress Party in the struggle for seats, it was not opposed to the fundamental ideology and outlook of the Congress Party. **It was not opposed to the Nehruvian model of capitalist development under the hegemony of the state capitalist class**—a capitalist development posing as socialism. It has not been consistently opposed in word and deed to the half-hearted secularism of the Congress Party which has meant equal state support to all religions (in actual fact all communalisms.) It is this half-hearted secularism that has mothered Khalistani fundamentalism in Punjab, Muslim fundamentalism in Kashmir and the *Hindutvawadi* of the RSS-BJP.

The Parliamentary Left has not been opposed to the Nehruvian method of national integration, which is protected in the final analysis, by military force. It has not been opposed to all the state institutions brought into being by the Nehruvian constitution of 1950. Instead it has sought to rule state governments **with the help of such institutions.** Institutions which have served the exploiter classes, while deceiving, disarming and suppressing the toiling masses. Institutions like:

—a bourgeois Parliament and the state assemblies, in which opposition MPs, MLAs, shadowbox with the ruling

party for public consumption, but work together in closed-door committees to share the spoils.

—an electoral system which in the name of being free and fair has given free rein to money-power and muscle-power.

—a judiciary unaccountable, unmanageable, a haven for crooks, smugglers, gangsters, tax defaulters, property grabbers, dowry killers, land-ceiling evaders, but a mirage of justice for the poor.

—a corrupt bloated bureaucracy, that is bursting at the seams of the national economy.

—a police force, the less said about which the better.

As a result of this sham anti-Congressism, the masses have not been able to perceive any fundamental difference between the Congress and the Parliamentary Left. On the question of cancelling elections in Punjab they speak with one voice. On the question of how secularism should be defended, they echo each other. On the question of how to protect the unity and integrity of the country they are one. On the questions of India's foreign policy and non-alignment, there are no fundamental differences. In short, **the Parliamentary Left has presented itself not as a revolutionary alternative to the Congress Party, but as a mere rival in the same system.**

True there are differences between the Parliamentary Left and the Congress Party like for eg. centre-state relations. But these differences are marginal. If centre-state relations were fundamental, then the Parliamentary Left should have been in the camp of the BJP, which is a strong advocate for more powers to the states and is a supporter of the Sarkaria Commission report.

The pincer

Today the sham anti-Congressism of the Parliamentary Left, like chickens and curses have come home to roost. Com. Namboodiripad's love letter to the Congress(I) not only created confusion and anger among the Left Front cadres, but also cost them the elections in Kerala. Com. Jyoti Basu's initial unsolicited announcement that the CPM would support the Congress(I) to form the government at the centre

resulted in disillusionment and resistance in the West Bengal unit of the party. The marriage of the Parliamentary Left to the National Front and yet its open flirting with the Congress(I) has subjected it to ridicule from the BJP. Throughout the last phase of the election campaign, every prominent JD and Left leader had to publicly declare that their marriage was not on the rocks. On Doordarshan, when Left Front leaders were grilled by Prannoy Roy about whether they would support the Congress(I), everyone of them stuttered, stammered, vacillated and were on the defensive, like men whose past was catching up with them.

Finally, for the first time in the parliamentary history of India, the Parliamentary Left will try out something bizarre and unheard of. They will be sitting in the **opposition** and yet providing **positive support** to the Congress(I) government. The Parliamentary Left is indeed all set to break new ground in dialectics!

But no amount of balancing acts can solve the contradictions in which the Parliamentary Left is trapped. These contradictions can only grow more acute. On the one hand, the spectre of the BJP sweeping to power will push the Parliamentary Left towards the Congress Party to electorally counteract the BJP. On the other hand, this method of 'fighting fascism' through electoral and parliamentary politics, will irretrievably affect its own electoral base in Kerala and West Bengal, where the Congress(I) is its main electoral rival. In short, **fighting fascism primarily through electoral and parliamentary politics can lead nowhere, except to the smashing of the remaining electoral base of the Left**, while the fascists pretending to be the "real opposition" are all poised to take over power through parliamentary elections.

Morbid fear of elections

It is for this reason that the Parliamentary Left has developed a morbid fear of elections, very much like a man who dreads the water after his astrologer has told him that he will die of drowning. Doordarshan gave the country a direct glimpse of this when one Left leader after another kept on repeating and repeating that at all costs the people

do not want another election soon. While BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi openly stated that he expected another election in two years, Com. Surjeet Singh of the CPM hoped that the next election would be held after 5 years.

This morbid fear of the next elections, under the guise that the people are fed up of elections, hides an important fact. The toiling people are fed up of elections not because of the **frequency**, but because they have **no revolutionary alternative** to the corrupt and opportunist centrist parties. Those who view the BJP as an alternative to the centrist parties do not suffer from electoral cynicism. But our comrade leaders will not derive any lesson from this. Instead of struggling to be a real alternative to the centrist parties, they are striving to forge a consensus with the Congress(I), in order to **prevent a fresh bout of elections**.

From one contradiction to another

This morbid fear of the next elections will play havoc with the social-democratic ideology and identity of the Parliamentary Left. We do not have to search far for the reason. The Parliamentary Left will have to **ensure the survival** of the Congress government, when this very government will be wading through the blood and tears of the people to 'solve' the severest economic crisis faced by the ruling exploiter classes since 1947. This economic crisis will be 'solved' by pushing our country into a debt-trap, by capitulating to imperialism and monopoly capital, and by pushing the entire burden of the crisis on to the working and toiling masses.

It is no secret that the country is facing a severe balance of payments crisis or in simple language, the government's foreign exchange treasury is empty, forcing the RBI to drastically slash imports. This slashing of imports has already had a catastrophic effect on our modern assembling plants set up by Rajiv's liberalisation—assembly plants which can only run **with the help of huge imports** from the West and Japan. The Congress(I) is all set to take a huge IMF loan which will only be sanctioned if the government agrees to its stringent conditions. These conditions are the slashing of food and fertiliser subsidies, affecting the peasantry and the urban poor. These conditions will mean further import-

dependent liberalisation, which will force managements to retrench workers and cut down benefits in order to make their industries competitive. Simultaneously there will be mass closures and mass unemployment as hundreds of small companies lose in the rat race. These conditions will mean the selling of profitable public sector units, to private sharks, shooting of workers like in Dalla—so that the government can garner funds to reduce its budgetary deficit. It will mean a massive price rise of all essential commodities, as the government hikes rail prices, diesel prices, postal rates, steel prices and devalues the rupee.

How will the Parliamentary Left ensure the survival of a government that accepts IMF conditionalities and yet keep up its social democratic image? How will the Parliamentary Left parrot that it is for strengthening the public sector and the public distribution system, when IMF conditionalities will savagely attack them? How will it claim that it stands for self-reliance when the Congress(I) is committed to import-dependent liberalisation and integration with the world imperialist economy? What will happen to its claim of being the champion of the downtrodden, when the BJP president has indicated that his party will oppose the entry of multinationals in the consumer sector, and the conditionalities of the IMF?

Yes, how will the Parliamentary Left get out of this contradiction? By voting against the government? But can it do this when it is filled with a morbid fear of the next elections?

Maybe then by **abstaining** on such fundamental issues or through walkouts.

But then is not **abstention which ensures the survival of the government**, another form of back-door support for the government?

The BJP game plan

To be sure the contradiction in which the Parliamentary Left has placed itself, will be fully exploited by the BJP which is going to sit in the opposition in "Majestic isolation". Compare how the Parliamentary Left is a **vacillating**

opposition, while the BJP is preparing to emerge as **THE OPPOSITION**. The moment election results poured in, while Left leaders went out of their way to assure the Congress(I) of their constructive issue-based support, the BJP raced full speed to the opposition benches and announced that the people's mandate was that they be **THE OPPOSITION**.

And this is what they are going to do. Their parliamentary strategy has been fine-tuned to convince the electorate that they are the **ONLY ALTERNATIVE**. The BJP will mercilessly push the Parliamentary Left and the National Front towards the ruling Congress(I) and then proclaim to the people—*"Enough is enough. You have tried the rest. Now is the time to go with the BJP."*

Mr. Vajpayee himself honestly admitted that his party would like **all parties to come together and range themselves against the BJP**. As a first step towards achieving this, Mr. Vajpayee has announced that the BJP's disinclination towards facing an election in the near future, would not prevent his party from opposing the Congress(I) when it will try to prove its majority in the Lok Sabha within four weeks.

Note carefully how the BJP views **its role as an Opposition to be primary** while its disinclination to facing another election is secondary. Now compare this with the Parliamentary Left which is all set to compromise its role as an opposition in order to avoid another election soon. Also note carefully how the BJP by announcing that it will vote against the Congress(I) is **pushing** the Parliamentary Left and National Front to either abstain or support the Congress government. In short, it is ensuring that the N.F-L.F. opposition discredits itself, while it prepares, prepares, prepares.

The effects of this BJP strategy will be traumatic for the National Front-Left Front. The ranks of their formations will be rocked by dissensions, with some like Biju Patnaik and Ajit Singh pulling towards the ruling Congress, while others like NTR pulling towards the BJP-led opposition and the rest like Mr. V.P. Singh and Jyoti Basu trying to work out a balance which just does not exist. The further traumatic effects on the rank and file members of these parties can

well be imagined— disillusionment, betrayal, confusion, hopelessness and hopefully, resistance.

Sham anti-BJPism

The Parliamentary Left cannot escape from the contradictions throttling it, if it merely **replaces** its sham anti-Congressism, by an anti-BJPism which is as much sham. Sham anti-BJPism works on the illusion that the fascists can be primarily contained **through the State machinery** (laws, police, courts, parliament). Sham anti-BJPism acts on the illusion that the BJP is primarily interested in parliamentary majorities. Sham anti-BJPism bases its anti-fascist strategy and tactics primarily on **preventing** the BJP from getting such a majority.

The fact is the BJP is not primarily interested in parliamentary majorities. **It is primarily interested in transforming the bourgeois-democratic State structure into a fascist-type State structure.** Winning parliamentary elections are not an end in itself for the BJP. They are just a means to help in this ultimate transformation.

In January this year, when Mr. L. K. Advani was asked about the possibility of his party coming to power in the next elections, he replied. "It is not an election victory that I am concerned with. The real question seems to me: Is the BJP ready for power?" How telling! And how frank!

But what kind of power is the BJP interested in? It is definitely not interested in the kind of power the Congress or the Left enjoy by winning parliamentary majorities. It is not even interested in the kind of power its own state governments enjoy today. **The BJP wants a qualitatively different kind of power.** A power in which every state institution will be purged of democratic, secular and even pseudo-secular elements and will be led and manned by the most rabid *Hindutvawadis*. A power that will be backed by fanaticized masses. A power that will have ideologically won over sizable sections of the intelligentsia. A power that will institutionalise the armed squads of the VHP-Bajrang Dals, who will then ruthlessly suppress any resistance to party

policy. The BJP is not yet ready for such a power. But it will be. Soon. It is ceaselessly preparing for it.

First, it is trying to discredit the Congress-National Front-Left Front in order to win over sections of the population who are under their influence. Hence its attempt to push the NF- LF towards the Congress so that it can assume the role of a consistent opposition. In the days to come, skyrocketing inflation and unemployment, growing insecurity and anarchy under Congress rule will only force the masses to cry out — "Enough is enough!"

Secondly, the BJP will ideologically keep hammering away at the fundamentals of Nehruvian ideology. It will expose and ridicule the pseudo-secularism of the centrists and instigate the mass of Hindus. It will fraudulently exploit the frustrations and anger of the people against all the corrupt institutions of parliamentary democracy and show that these institutions come in the way of building the Ram temple. The BJP president openly stated over Doordarshan that the Ram Janmabhoomi issue cannot be decided by the judiciary or even Parliament. In contrast, note how the Parliamentary Left is bending backwards to defend the institutions of parliamentary democracy which have only served the exploiter classes.

Thirdly, the BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal, will continue organising armed training for the most fanatical of their cadres. Wherever they have state governments, they will ensure that government programmes are implemented through these cadres to establish their base of support. They will give state patronage and police protection to their armed wings and their criminal activities like suppressing workers struggles, clearing slums, intimidating and attacking secular and progressive forces, etc.

Fourthly, the BJP will continue to polarise the State machinery. In the Ayodhya agitation, its slogan was "*Andar ki baat hai — police hamare saath hai*". Huge sections of the UP police, especially the PAC, lived up to its expectations. The public parade of top bureaucrats, police officials, retired military officers, joining the BJP before the elections, was just a foretaste of things to come. Its grip on the state administrations in UP, MP, Rajasthan, and H.P. will be used

to warn every public servant that the BJP is the party of the future.

Meticulously preparing

Yes, the BJP is meticulously preparing to become the party of the future. It is preparing itself for power at a time when the ruling exploiter classes are facing one severe crisis after another. **It is preparing to serve the most reactionary sections of the exploiters who are finding parliamentary democracy a burden.** As the economic crisis deepens, as political contradictions become unmanageable, parliamentary democracy by which the centrists and the Parliamentary Left swear, will be discarded and replaced by a fascist-type State.

We will just mention one crucial aspect of this economic crisis, *viz.* the foreign debt, which has reached an astounding Rs. 125,000 crores. Servicing this foreign debt in foreign exchange has reached such crisis proportions that our import-dependent industries have had to be **starved** of essential imports, leading to mass unemployment, closures and bankruptcies. Fresh IMF loans will not only go towards paying for past loans but will also mean agreeing to IMF conditionalities. The conditionalities, like cutting down agricultural subsidies, tightening on loan recoveries, reducing government expenditure etc. will not only affect **powerful sections of the rich peasantry** but will also affect Central grants to state governments which represent **powerful regional interests**. For example, some days back, the RBI stopped overdraft payments to the Bihar government because of which the State government had no money to even pay the July salaries of its employees.

Further, IMF-dictated liberalisation and privatisation of the public sector will directly **affect the organised working class**. Their unions are controlled by all the major political parties who will have to 'resist' these measures if they have to continue their shops.

Thus the economic crisis and its bourgeois solutions will not only hit the working and toiling masses, but even powerful sections of the exploiter classes. As long as the Indian State could ensure the development of **all** the exploiter clas-

ses, parliamentary democracy helped in sorting out the contradictions of these exploiters. Today the Indian State **cannot ensure** the development of all the exploiter classes it has spawned. Hence parliamentary democracy can only mean continuous political instability, hung parliaments, delayed budgets, plan holidays, mass movements against government policies, as affected sections paralyse the system. The most reactionary exploiters have to replace parliamentary democracy with a fascist-type State, not only to crush the resistance of the masses, but also the opposition of those exploiters who cannot be accommodated and patronised by the State. It is this impending situation that makes the BJP a party of the future. It is to prepare itself to wield this fascist power, that the BJP is primarily building and strengthening itself today.

The anti-BJPism of the Parliamentary Left is sham, because it believes that the BJP can be checked by institutions of the State already rotting with fascist elements; because it believes that the BJP can be kept away from parliamentary power by tailing and capitulating to the centrist parties. But the problem is that the BJP is not primarily interested in parliamentary power. It is primarily preparing for fascist power and the electoral wheeling-dealing, opportunism and vacillations of the Parliamentary Left **cannot** counteract it. In fact the irony is that this type of electoral politics will help the BJP gain parliamentary power, which it needs in order to give its fascist rule the guise of a "people's mandate."

The rise of fascism will inevitably create a breach between the leaders of the Parliamentary Left who tail the centrists in "defense of parliamentary democracy" and their cadres who have to fight on the ground, **where no such democracy exists**. The contradictions in which the Parliamentary Left is caught, cannot but make this breach wider. Recently in Punjab, the cadres of the CPI heroically fighting the Khalistanis, forced their central leadership to stop tailing the Congress(I)'s 'boycott elections line' and instead supported elections. As the ruling Congress(I) clears the way for the opposition BJP, by hiking prices, cutting down subsidies, privatising public sector units, creating

mass unemployment and bankruptcies, the propping-up of such a Congress government by the Parliamentary Left will fuel resentment, frustration and resistance in their parties. Will this lead to disillusionment or will it help in the consolidation of a Revolutionary Left which will be the centre of the anti-fascist struggle?

It can only become the latter, if the anti-fascist forces are clear about their tasks today.

Our tasks

The first task is to oppose the support of the Parliamentary Left leaders to the Congress(I). Such support will only help the fascist forces to discredit the Left movement and then ride to power. Such support will only help the fascists to pretend to be the **REAL OPPOSITION** and the **ONLY ALTERNATIVE**. The role of the Left in Parliament and outside is to use Parliament as a tribune to expose how the Congress(I) is paving the way for fascism.

The role of the Left in Parliament and outside is **not to form a consensus with the centrists**, but to instead push the BJP to support the Congress(I). The primary role of the Left is to present a **revolutionary alternative** to the masses, especially when the BJP is presenting a fascist alternative. The role of the Left in Parliament is to mercilessly expose the closed-room conspiracies of the centrists and fascists to push the burden of the economic crisis on to the backs of the toiling people.

The second immediate task of the anti-fascist forces is to expose **the fraud of consensus politics** peddled by the centrists. Can there be consensus between the big monopolists who will swallow up the IMF loan and the workers who will lose their jobs due to liberalisation? Can there be consensus between the hoarders, black-marketeers and big traders who will be fattened by price hikes and the toiling masses who have no bellies left to tighten? Can there be consensus between the rich who will continue to splurge valuable foreign exchange, while the masses are forced to pay for it? There can be no consensus between the centrists and the Revolutionary Left for they represent antagonistic classes. One the exploiter, the other the exploited. There can

and will be a temporary consensus between the centrists and the fascists especially when the exploiters are in a crisis. It is our task to expose this consensus to the masses.

The third task of the anti-fascist forces is to expose the illusion peddled by the centrists that the institutions of parliamentary democracy can halt the fascists. These institutions are being fascisized. Secular, and democratic officials are being harassed, silenced and sidelined. These institutions instead of reflecting the democratic will of the people are becoming a burden on the people with their venality, nepotism, corruption, unaccountability, extravagances, and repression. These institutions could not stop the growth of the Khalistani fascists in Punjab or the Muslim fascists in Kashmir. Fascism can only be halted by the people, the toiling people, if they are **united, organised and armed** to not only see through the deceptions and lies of the fascists, but also to confront them blow for blow.

Our fourth immediate task is to defeat the fascists in the battle of ideas. The fascists are strong today, because they have half won the battle of ideas, because they have convinced even reasonable people that their outlook is correct. The Parliamentary Left has been content with exposing the pseudo-Hinduism of the fascists, **but this is not enough.**

As we wrote in our November issue, "the fascists claim that they represent **militant nationalism** and that this nationalism is the solution to all the ills and problems facing the nation today. The Left has miserably **underestimated the irresistible attraction of militant nationalism cloaked in religious symbolism**, when secessionism, terrorism, Bofors, defections, corruption, drugs, gang wars, etc. have become keywords of our political vocabulary; when the country is suffering not only from an economic and political crisis but also a crisis of ethics and character. The Left has ignored the power of this militant nationalism and has been content in dubbing the fascists as communal. It has restricted its propaganda to preaching to the masses, humanism and brotherhood. In actual fact, since the masses by and large live in harmony and brotherhood, this empty and condescending preaching is no answer to militant nationalism.

The Left can only win the battle of ideas if it begins to expose and attack the ideology of militant nationalism itself. We have to mercilessly expose how this **militant nationalism** serves the most rabid exploiters of the people, how it will unleash the most savage attacks on the toiling people. We have to expose how this militant Hitlerian nationalism cannot solve the economic and political crisis; expose how it is whipped up by the agents of the exploiter classes, so that the economic and political crisis does not lead to a liberating political awakening; so that any and every mass revolt is ruthlessly crushed by a fascist State and its thugs. The Parliamentary Left is mortally afraid of being dubbed anti-national and unpatriotic and hence its morbid fear and impotence in opposing head-on, militant nationalism.

We cannot win the minds and hearts of the masses unless we show at every step how militant nationalism is the enemy of the people, unless we vigorously counterpose the militant nationalism of the fascists with the militant internationalism of the working class."

We place these above tasks before the Left and Democratic forces of the country, before every man, woman and youth who want to serve in the anti-fascist struggle. We are painfully aware of the differences that divide the anti-fascist forces in general, and the Left in particular. These differences cannot be wished away and yet they cannot be used as an excuse for not working together in the anti-fascist struggle. In fact the struggle itself will sort out some of these differences, while some of the differences will give vibrancy, vitality and strength to the struggle.

So comrades,

Let's march separately if we must.

But let's vow now, to strike together!



Pseudo-secularism vs. pseudo-Hindutvawad!

ONE of the most important points on which the ideological struggle between Nehruvianism and Hindutvawad has been waged is on the question of secularism. During the past five years, the RSS-BJP-VHP have launched a virtual propaganda blitzkrieg against the "pseudo-secularism" of the Congress Party. Although it is a clear case of the pot calling the kettle black, yet the votaries of Nehruvian secularism have been paralysed in answering the charges of the fascists. This sharp polemic by Anand Kumtha, first published in August 1991, exposes the mock-struggle between the pseudo-secularism of the Congress Party and the pseudo-Hindutvawad of the RSS-BJP-VHP.

"Alternative to Nehru line is Fascism."

**— Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao,
Prime Minister and Congress president.**

"Secularism has destroyed this country."

**— Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi,
BJP president**

INDIA witnesses a strange battle today. On the one hand are those claiming to fight fascism, but who in the name of secularism have been patronising communal forces within all communities — whether they be Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. On the other hand are those claiming to be the sole protectors of the nation, but who in the name of Shriram and *Hindutva* have been fuelling riots, rape and murder, bringing ruin upon thousands of families.

A battle between pseudo-secularists versus pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* — a bizarre battle that has also drawn many ordinary people into its vortex. On the one side are those who are being drawn towards the RSS family sponsored *Hindutvawad* because they are disgusted by the encouragement given by the Congress and other 'secular' parties to the minority communalists and even secessionists. On the other side are those who have turned to Nehruvian secularism to fight the pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* because they are angered by the desecration of the tolerant teachings of Hinduism at the hands of the RSS.

But frauds cannot be fought with the ideology of other frauds. For that, it is necessary to use the weapon of truth against all frauds. For that, it is necessary to understand how the governments of pseudo-secular parties like the Congress, who are whimpering against the fascists today, have themselves aided and abetted these very pseudo-*Hindutvawadi* fascists all these years. It is necessary to understand how in fact these fascist powers have built a mass base for themselves by sharpening their claws against the very 'secularism' of this pseudo-secular State. Only then will it

be clear why this Congress-sponsored secularism is totally impotent to fight the RSS which is preparing to impose a Hitlerian dictatorship on our country. Only then can we forge and sharpen the real weapon which can expose and defeat the fascists.

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**"Every Hindu politician or pen-pusher who aspires to pass the test (of secularism) has to, (1) proclaim that Islam stands for equality and brotherhood; (2) celebrate the Prophet's birthday with fanfare and throw an *iftar* dinner at the end of Ramzan; (3) attend *urs* or *sufis* and Urdu *mushairas*. He should also keep quiet or look the other way when Muslims breed like rats."
— Mr. Sitaram Goel, an RSS pandit.**

"Pampering the minorities" is the oft-repeated accusation — the trump card of the pseudo-Hindutvawadis against the pseudo-secularists. (But of course you are not supposed to ask why the BJP-RSS leaders themselves host *iftar* dinners and throw banquets for their Muslim communalist friends.)

The Congress and the other pseudo-secular parties have no answer to this charge of "pampering the minorities". For, even if this charge is 99 per cent false, there is still a 1 per cent element of truth in it.

The pseudo-Hindutvawadis are forever rattling off examples of Muslim personal law, the Shah Bano case, etc., to 'prove' that the pseudo-secularists have pampered the Muslims. When they ask why Muslims should be allowed to have four wives, they are in actual fact protesting against the denial of a similar right for the Hindu rich. It was for this reason that these very forces had opposed the Hindu Code Bill which banned bigamy for Hindu men.

But have Muslims really been pampered? Let us for the time being, leave aside the fact that the 1961 census showed that the number of Hindu men having more than one wife was much more than the number of such Muslim men. Let us also leave aside the fact that as per the 1981 census, there are only 937 Muslim women for every 1000 Muslim men — not even one woman per man, leave alone four! How on earth does the right to marry four wives mean the "pampering of Muslims"? If a Muslim woman is subjected not only to the harassment of her in-laws but also to the humiliation of having co-wives, is she being pampered? The countless Shah Banos, divorced by their husbands with just the utterance of *talaq, talaq, talaq* and deprived of even the right to demand alimony from their husbands — are these destitute Muslim women being pampered? Is it not a cruel joke to say that they are being appeased when they are being oppressed? And yet, despite the fact that personal law tyrannises 50 percent of Muslims, *viz.* Muslim women, our *Hindutvawadis* call this "appeasement of Muslims"! Does this not mean that they refuse to regard Muslim women as human beings?

Today a common worker (whatever his religion may be) has to lead such a miserable life that he finds it nearly impossible to maintain a family of one wife and two children. How then could he possibly feed four wives and twenty-five children? Who really have been pampered by the right to have four wives? Only a handful of wealthy Muslim men, with huge *havelis* and riches to keep a harem of wives — wealthy Muslim men who form a minuscule 1 per cent of all Muslims. That is why we say that the accusation that "the pseudo-secular rulers have pampered Muslims" has only a 1 per cent element of truth in it and the rest 99 per cent is pure falsehood! If all Muslims had been pampered, then all the crores of them should have been living in mansions today. Not a single Muslim should have been found living in slums or sleeping on the pavements.

When our 'secular' rulers bend their knees before a handful of reactionary Imams and Mullahs who keep the Muslim masses socially backward and tied to their *fatwas*, forcibly extracting "religious taxes" from them and using the weapon

of excommunication and social ostracism to keep them in line, can we say that the Muslim masses have been pampered? When precisely the oppressors of the Muslim masses, oppressors who form only 1 per cent of all Muslims, are being pampered, is not saying "all Muslims are pampered" a cruel joke on the Muslim working and toiling masses?

Since the governments of the Congress and other pseudo-secular parties have, in fact, pampered 1 per cent of the Muslims, they are totally incapable of answering the accusation hurled by the pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* at them.

Why did the Congress governments pamper this 1 per cent? The answer to this lies in the nature of the "modern" India that the Nehru dynasty built; a "modern" India built on the foundations of savage exploitation; an India, whose modernisation has benefited only the exploiter classes. To ensure that the exploiter classes reaped the full fruits of scientific and technological progress; to ensure that they looted the working and toiling people to the fullest; it was essential for them to keep the masses as backward and unorganised as possible. It is for this reason that Nehruvian 'secular' governments patronised these reactionary self-proclaimed *thekedaars* of religion — *thekedaars* who on behalf of the ruling classes have willingly taken the *theka* (contract) to keep the masses of their community entrenched in superstition and all kinds of backward and barbaric rituals and practices, all in the name of religion. The *theka* to divert the anger of the people not against their exploiters but against the common people of other religions, and thus sabotage and crush the struggles of the working people against injustice. For this dirty work, the Nehruvian pseudo-secularist governments patronised not just the *thekedaars* of Islam, but also the *thekedaars* of Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity, etc. They pampered not just 1 per cent amongst the Muslims, but also 1 per cent amongst the Hindus, and 1 per cent amongst all the communities. They patronised not just the pseudo-*Islamwadis* but also the pseudo-*Hindutvawadis*!

"Secularism means that while religion is completely free, the State, including in its wide fold various religions and cultures, gives protection and opportunities to all..."

— Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

Following the Nehruvian version of "secularism" successive Congress governments have given equal protection and opportunities to all fascists from amongst all communities, to freely misuse religion in the interest of the exploiter classes.

Thus the Congress worked hand-in-glove with the Muslim League to keep the Muslim masses backward. This same Congress propped up Bhindranwale in Punjab, whose *chelas* (followers) are till today ruthlessly crushing the struggles of Sikh landless labourers. This very same Congress created and strengthened the Shiv Sena to crush the workers' unions in Bombay led by the Left. The pampering of the Shiv Sena by the Congress was so open that the Shiv Sena used to be called the Vasant Sena, after the then Congress chief minister, Mr. Vasantrao Naik. In return for all this pampering, the Shiv Sena made electoral alliances with the very same "Muslim-pampering" Congress and actively supported its brutal anti-people Emergency.

All the fascists were given full support by the 'secular' Congress rulers to get a stranglehold on the minds of their masses. They have been allowed to open and control innumerable trusts, especially schools, madrassas, colleges, trusts, polytechnics, etc. They have been allowed to use the schools and colleges under their control, to spread not so much pride in the good teachings of their own religion, but instead to spread hatred for other religions and the people of other religions.

They have been allowed to set up countless "charitable trusts" which have established hostels, orphanages, ashrams, dharmashalas, etc. all over the country. They have with this *daan-dharma* (charity) won respectability amongst

their own communities while the communal trustees of such 'charitable' organisations have instigated countless riots.

But of course, all this was done with the blessings and aid of the 'secular' State. The 'secular' government in addition helped these trusts acquire huge tracts of land almost free of charge; it exempted them from many taxes; it gave them a free hand to use these trusts for converting their ill-gotten wealth and black money into white; it pumped huge sums of public money into these trusts in the form of grants; it allowed them to conceal their accounts from the very masses they claimed to serve.

With all this State backing and patronage at every step, is it surprising that the arrogance of the communalists has reached the skies today. Muslim communalists today refuse to give scientific knowledge and instead teach reactionary superstitions in their *madrassa* schools. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad recently sent lumpens to beat up a parent who had complained against a teacher who had compulsorily sold VHP stickers to the students. All this is but a logical outcome of the pseudo-secular policies of the government.

Nehruvianism defined secularism to mean, **not** opposition to the reactionaries within all communities, but, on the contrary, **aid** to all of them. We call the Nehruvian governments pseudo-secularists, NOT because they have "pampered the Muslims" as the pseudo- *Hindutvawadis* claim but because they have pampered the reactionary fascists within all communities.

The Nehruvian policy of appeasing **equally** the communalists of all religions, has helped these communalists in yet another way. It gave them the opportunity to incite the masses of their communities that the masses of the other communities were being pampered. Thus the Hindu communalists point their finger at the Shah Bano incident and other such incidents to incite the Hindu masses that Muslims are being pampered and the Hindus are being suppressed in their own land. In the same way, the Muslim communalists point their finger at the opening of the Babri Masjid locks and the permission given by the Congress government to perform the *Shilanyas*, to incite the Muslim masses that Muslims are not safe in India.

"The funds (worth crores of rupees) collected (by the VHP) for the building of the temple are obviously being used for political and personal purposes."

**— Mr. Pranab Mukherji,
Congress spokesman.**

"The government does not at all supervise the spending of crores of rupees received as donations from foreign countries by Christian or Muslim organisations."

— VHP Booklet.

Today Mr. Pranab Mukherji screams that the money collected by the VHP for the Ram Mandir was used by the BJP in the elections. But it was Mr. Mukherji's own Congress(I) government that elevated the poison-spewing VHP to the status of a "charitable trust" by registering it. So why this pseudo-outcry against them now?

Similarly, later when the Janata Dal government was in power and when an official of the income-tax department issued a notice to the VHP to present its true accounts, who was it who cancelled the notice and punitively transferred the official, thus saving the VHP's neck? None other than the 'secular' finance minister of the then Janata Dal government, Prof. Madhu Dandavate? So today, when the VHP has intensified its fascist propaganda and activities, what right do these leaders have to open their mouths against them? The irony is that after being themselves pampered by the pseudo-secular Congress rulers, the leaders of the VHP still continue to shout themselves hoarse that these rulers are "pampering the Muslims"! And in spite of the VHP thus biting the very hand that feeds them, the pseudo-secular rulers also still continue to pamper and appease the pseudo-Hindutvawadis. What a rare kind of friendship indeed!

Today, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, a central minister and a senior Congressman, is fearlessly proclaiming that "those who are dividing the nation along religious lines are certainly acting against the national interest, and there is no

other definition for them but *deshdrohis* (traitors)." Absolutely true. But tell us Mr. Scindia, what then would you call your own party whose governments have all along bred and fed these very forces who are dividing the nation along religious lines?

The Congress Party has been helping the fascist forces within all communities, not only through its state patronage but also by working shoulder to shoulder with them in their macabre plans. For example, many senior Congress leaders have adorned top posts of not only the Vishwa Hindu Parishad but also the Babri Masjid Action Committee, which have used the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue to incite both the Hindu and Muslim masses against each other.

The pseudo-Islamwadis and the pseudo-Hindutvawadis too are old friends, bound by strong ties — those of together crushing the working and toiling masses. In 1979, the Jamaat-i-Islami hosted a banquet in honour of the RSS chief, Mr. Balasaheb Deoras. The RSS constantly screams (for public consumption) that Muslim organisations are being funded by Saudi Arabia. But at this banquet, the RSS chief gladly accepted a gold pen brought from Saudi Arabia and presented to him by the Jamaat-i-Islami. A few days later the most barbaric "communal riots" were engineered in Jamshedpur — by these very friends who had dined together, but were now inciting the masses against each other. This age-old collaboration of these fascists is confirmed by their own men. BJP MP Dr. J. K. Jain (who made the well-known video cassette on the Ayodhya police firing on the *kar sevaks*) recently threw a dinner party for the notorious Saudi Arabian arms trafficker, Adnan Khashoggi. The dinner was graced by the Naib Imam, son of Shahi Imam Bukhari as well as the senior RSS leader, Mr. Nanaji Deshmukh.

When questioned about this, Dr. J. K. Jain said that this was nothing new as he had arranged countless such meetings in the past, including one between Shahi Imam and the RSS chief Mr. Deoras.

In the recent Lok Sabha elections, the Muslim League and the BJP together joined hands with the Congress in Kerala, to defeat the Left Front there. Despite this, the Left Front

still believes that the Congress can fight communalism and protect secularism.

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"Mr. L.K. Advani is following in the footsteps of his illustrious fascist predecessors, Hitler and Mussolini."

— Mr. Pranab Mukherji

One important facet of Nehruvian "secularism" is that, the fascist attackers on the common people have received direct aid and protection from the pseudo-secular State. The Jamaat-i-Islami, RSS, Shiv Sena, etc. have been indicted for instigating riots, by numerous inquiry commissions of the 'secular' State itself. But no action has been taken against these criminal organisations. On the contrary, the leaders of these very organisations instigating riots, are called on to form the "peace committees" after the riots. In Bombay, when a case was filed by some individuals some months ago, against the Syedna, the religious head of the Bohra community, for inciting Shia-Sunni riots, it was Mr. Sharad Pawar's 'secular' state government that came to the Syedna's help and quashed all proceedings against him. It is an open secret that, to crush the workers' unions in Bombay led by the Left, the Congress government's police department has always protected and covered up the lumpen activities of the Shiv Sena 'activists'. So when today, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, Mr. Pranab Mukherji, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia and other leaders of this very Congress indulge in empty talk against fascism, one feels like telling them, "Honourable leaders, fascism means the rule of organised lumpen gangs, with the full backing of the repressive State. When all your governments have protected and even nurtured these lumpen gangs of the fascists, what opposition is your government going to put up to fascism? Whom are you trying to fool?"

Prime Minister Rao has announced the setting up of a special riot force to combat riots. This when he knows only too well that the fascists within all communities who in-

stigate these riots, have infiltrated every arm of the 'secular' State machinery. Even a look at the BJP list of candidates for the previous election will show how many high-placed officers from the police, army, courts, bureaucracy and other arms of the State machinery have joined the BJP after retirement. Besides, there are countless men belonging to the RSS, Shiv Sena, Jamaat-i-Islami, etc., currently in service at every level in the State machinery and who are harassing and silencing the few honest secular officers still left in the State machinery. Will such a State machinery take any step against the fascists? Mr. Narasimha Rao can set up as many riot forces as he pleases, but the fascists will roar challengingly and even more openly, "*Andar ke baat hai, police hamare saath hai?*" ("It is a secret. The police are with us.")

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"The only way to exist in India is to co-exist."
— *Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao.*

"In this country, Hindu dominance is inevitable. If Hindus are treated at par with Muslims, if it is attempted to make the two equal, then this country cannot be run."
— *Mr. Girilal Jain, the latest RSS pandit.*

The difference in the approaches of the Congress and the RSS vis- a-vis "pampering" and appeasement, is that, while the Congress, in the name of secularism, equally strengthened the fascists of every community, the RSS cannot tolerate this equal treatment to all the fascists. The RSS wants its hegemony over all the other fascists. This hegemony does not mean that the RSS will suppress the communalists of other religions. On the contrary. The pseudo- *Hindutawadis* have a very warm and close relationship with the pseudo-*Islamwadis*. In their *Hindu Rashtra*, these reactionary Muslim fascists will not be driven out from our country. On the contrary, the vice-like grip of the Muslim fascists over the Muslim masses, will only be strengthened.

All that the Hindu fascists demand is that the Muslim communalists bow to their hegemony, and not to that of the 'secular' Congress Party.

The Congress policy of equally pampering the fascists of all communities worked smoothly for forty years after 'Independence'. But it cannot work any longer. This is because the Hindu fascists have raised the dispute of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid, in which the government of the Congress or other pseudo-secular parties, cannot appease both the Hindu fascists and the Muslim fascists **at the same time**. By inciting mass passions over this dispute, the pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* have caught the pseudo-secularists in a real pincer and they are totally incapable of opposing them.

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"Hindu Rashtra would be a truly secular State."
— *Mahant Avidyanath, BJP MP.*

**"If Muslims are to live in India, it will be at the
mercy of Hindus."**
— *Ms. Uma Bharati, BJP MP.*

The BJP speaks in two different voices on every single issue. It puts on the moderate, liberal mask to charm the upper-middle class intelligentsia, and comes out with its rabidly reactionary face to whip up a frenzy amongst the masses.

The latest ploy of the BJP in charming the intelligentsia is to claim that the Congress and other centrist parties are pseudo-secular, while it only is truly secular. Q.E.D.. But in reality, the BJP's secularism is even more pseudo than its *Hindutva*.

Well known RSS writer, Mr. Muzaffar Hussain writes: "Secularism is a *lungi* which anyone can drape round his waist. This *lungi* can do for Farooq Abdulla as well as for Karunanidhi. Banatwalla can drape this *lungi* with as much ease as Chimanbhai can." But Mr. Hussain, what makes a

remarkable sight today, is how your Mr. Advani and other RSS leaders are draping themselves in a similar *lungi*.

For many years RSS leaders had been declaring that secularism is a western concept and has no place in Hindu India. But these very leaders are saying today that their *Hindutva* is itself secular. Former BJP president, Mr. L.K. Advani, went even further to say that India has remained secular only because it is a Hindu-majority country (implying that people of other faiths cannot be secular at all). Wonderful logic, Shri Advani! All these years, you were proclaiming that secularism is a western concept, and has only been implemented in the Christian-majority countries of the West. And today you yourself are suddenly saying that only Hindus, and none others, can be truly secular. But try as you may Mr. Advani, your jugglery cannot hide the fact that there are also Muslim-majority countries, like Turkey, Yemen, and Iraq, which designate themselves, **NOT** as Islamic countries but as secular countries.

Mr. Advani, while peddling his party's claim to secularism says, "We could not think in terms of the minorities being second-class citizens. In India, every single citizen, irrespective of whether he is a Hindu, whether he is a Muslim, whether he is a Christian, whether he is a Parsi, is equal; they are all equal." Mr. Advani also says that a secular State "guarantees full freedom of faith and worship." But what did the former RSS supremo — Mr. Advani's *parampoojya guruji* Golwalkar write on this? Thus wrote the *guruji*: "The non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must either...hold in reverence, the Hindu religion, and must entertain no ideas but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and religion...or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving...not even citizen's rights." While Mr. Advani chants the mantra of *sabko samaan nyaya* ("equal justice for all"), simultaneously, BJP Member of Parliament, Ms. Uma Bharati screams, "If Muslims are to live in India, it will be at the mercy of Hindus." What a consistent, disciplined and principled party indeed!

Mr. Advani says that anyone with the least inkling of the Hindu *Rajya-shastra* knows that the Hindu conception of the State has always been a secular one. But what is the truth?

If one even browses through the *Manusmriti*, what does one find? "A Brahmin may take possession of the goods of a *shudra* with perfect peace of mind, for, since nothing at all should belong to the *shudra* as his own, he is one whose property can be taken away by his master," (VIII 417). "If a *shudra* utters an insulting word to a Brahmin, the correct punishment is to kill him," (VIII 267). Such is the system which Mr. Advani holds up as the secular ideal, a system in which, leave alone people of other religions, even Hindus of different castes are denied "equal justice for all"!

Mr. Advani's organisation, the RSS, is aiming to bring to India a modernised version of this very kind of State — a State that will outrightly deny Hindu workers justice against the exploitation by Hindu capitalists; a State that will help Hindu landlords intensify their oppressions of Hindu landless labourers; a State that will crush the Hindu toiling masses in order to protect the interests of the blood-thirsty Hindu exploiter classes. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP state government has brutally bulldozed the huts of thousands of Hindu slum-dwellers and gifted the land to Hindu (and even Muslim) builders. The Shiv Sena has cold-bloodedly broken up numerous strikes of Hindu workers to help Hindu (and even non-Hindu) capitalists. And after all this, the *Hindutvawadis* expect the awakened people to believe that they stand for "Justice for all."

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"Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega, wohi desh par raaj karega."

(Only those who talk about Hindu interest shall rule over the country.)

— Vishwa Hindu Parishad slogan.

The acting president of the VHP is the top monopoly capitalist, Vishnu Hari Dalmia, long-time exploiter of Hindu workers. Whose interests does the VHP work for, the interest of Hindu capitalists like Dalmia, or his Hindu workers? In the recent Lok Sabha election campaign, the industrialist Singhanian, not only gave his own plane, but also himself

piloted Mr. Advani all over the country. It is also an open secret that numerous big Hindu traders heavily fund the BJP, from the huge profits they extract by looting the common people, most of them Hindus.

Therefore, however much the pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* talk about the interests of all Hindus being one, all conscious working and toiling people can see that the interests they stand for are those of the Hindu capitalists, traders, landlords, rajas and rajmatas, in a word: the Hindu exploiters. Whenever the loot of these exploiter classes is endangered, they scream, "Hinduism is in danger!" Yes, in exactly the same way as the pseudo-*Islamwadis* scream, "Islam is in danger" when the loot of the Muslim exploiters backing them is endangered.

But the Nehruvian parties like the Congress will never expose the class base of the fascists, for they themselves also represent the exploiter classes. When the VHP talks of its so-called monolithic "Hindu interest", the Congress leaders do not have the spine to ask which Hindu interests. When a Hindu capitalist never pays his Hindu workers even five paise more in the name of *Hindutva*, then how can Hindu interests be one? When Hindu landlords oppress and rape Hindu dalits, how can Hindu interests be one? Similarly, does a Muslim black-marketeer and hoarder cheat his Muslim "brethren" any less in the name of Islami brotherhood? How then can all Muslims be brothers? Congress leaders will never ask these questions and expose the fascists, for, just like the fascists, their party too is working for these exploiter classes.

Therefore, just as the pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* say that the interests of all Hindus are one in order to hide the differences between Hindu exploiter and Hindu exploited, the pseudo-secularists say that the interests of all Indians are one. Just as the fascists scream, "Religion is in danger!" when the loot of the exploiters is in danger, so also the pseudo-secularists scream, "Our country is in danger! Our country is in a crisis!" when they are in a crisis.

When the exploiter classes face a crisis, the pseudo-secularists and the pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* are quick to join hands. See how the BJP has supported the new industrial

policy and the new trade policy of the Congress government dictated by the IMF. See how before the recent Lok Sabha elections, the then chief minister of U.P., *mullah* Mulayam Singh Yadav sold the Rs. 600 crore public sector state cement corporation to the VHP acting president, Dalmia's family, for barely Rs. 26 crores. The workers protested, demanding that the option of buying the three factories should first of all be given to them. When they held a dharna outside one factory at Dalla, the police that had been sent by *mullah* Mulayam Singh to the aid of the *Hindutvawadi* Dalmia, fired on the workers, killing 20 and injuring 66. But when this same *mullah* Mulayam Singh government's police had fired on the *kar sevaks* at Ayodhya, the VHP had not only raised an uproar, but it had also despicably duped the Hindu masses by publishing a long list of dead *kar sevaks*, which also contained names of people alive, some of whom had never even been to Ayodhya! But now when this very same *mullah* Mulayam Singh government's police shot down Hindu workers at Dalla, the VHP rejoiced — for this time, Shri Mulayam Singh had protected their Dalmia's interests, i.e. the interests of their *Hindutva*!

Is it then not clear that the pseudo-secularists use their State power, not to protect the working masses from the onslaught of the fascists, but instead to protect the fascists from the wrath of the working masses?

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**"Whoever wants to put obstacles in our way, will
be thrown out of the country."
— Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi.**

The fascists are bloated with arrogance today, for they know for sure that this pseudo-secular State, far from obstructing their path, will only help them.

However, the awakened working and toiling people cannot be dependent upon this exploiters' State power to stop the advance of fascism. They must rely instead upon the im-

mense strength of the crores of common, working and toiling people — a strength that once awakened, can bring the most brutal power down to its knees. History has shown that it was this strength of the awakened and organised working masses that decisively routed the most powerful fascist power dreaming of conquering and ruling over the whole world — Hilterian Nazism.

The pseudo-Hindutvawadis or the pseudo-Islamwadis can never protect religion. It is only the working masses who practise the true *manavdharma*. It is they alone who, by defeating the enemies of humanity, can protect the true *manavdharma*.

So also, in the days to come, it will be the working and toiling people, and not this pseudo-secular State, who will protect secularism. For the common people of different religions, living together, working together and struggling together against common problems, secularism is not a western concept, but a daily necessity. The courageous Hindus who have sheltered their Muslim neighbours during barbaric riots engineered by the fascists, the brave Muslims who have protected their Hindu neighbours in these riots — they do not need any discourse to understand the importance of secularism. The pseudo-Hindutvawadis and the pseudo-Islamwadis want only to fester the Ram Janmabhoomi- Babri Masjid dispute. But if left to the true devotees of Ram and Allah, the common Hindus and Muslims, would definitely evolve a commonly acceptable solution. The daily experiences of life of the common working people tells them that the ordinary Muslims living in slums are not pampered. What they see every day is the increasing pampering of the rich, the oppressive dictatorship of the rich and powerful over the common workers and dalits. This daily experience of oppression, of bloodsucking exploitation, etches a deep scar on the bodies and minds of the working masses, a wound that never ceases to hurt, a mark that all the frauds and deceits of the exploiter parties can never erase. From the lessons that the exploiter classes are themselves imparting through their inhuman acts, the working and toiling people are learning slowly but surely, and will continue to learn.

The fascists are today bloated with arrogance, because the pseudo-secularists are caught in a trap. The very pseudo-secular State which helped them to grow from strength to strength, is being threatened by them, today. Fascists who want to get rid of the pseudo-secular State and replace it with a State that is a hundred times more repressive, and brutally dictatorial, i.e., a fascist State. And with what face can the pseudo-secularists, who have helped the fascists all along, stop them now!


Today the exploiter classes in our country are caught in a grave economic crisis, and are finding the present bourgeois parliamentary democracy a burden. To overcome their economic crises, they want to accelerate and increase the exploitation of the working masses many times over, they want to brutally crush all those opposing their inhuman exploitation and oppressions, they want to snatch away whatever minimal rights the masses have won in this bourgeois parliamentary democracy. For this, the most reactionary sections of the exploiter classes want to dismantle bourgeois democracy and in its place impose an openly fascist dictatorship. Till now, Nehruvianism looked after the interests of all the exploiter classes. But in today's conditions, the usefulness of Nehruvian parliamentary democracy for all these sections of the exploiter classes is running out — and that is why (even though the RSS has been in existence from pre-‘Independence’ days), the fascists are today receiving massive funds, support, respectability on an unprecedented scale. These exploiter classes are clapping with joy today, for, just when one devil is lying on his death-bed after fulfilling his life's mission for the exploiters, another devil has begun fulfilling his life's mission for them in full swing. That is why, the exploiters and the fascists are bloated with arrogance.

The Nehruvian parties and their State are incapable of taking on the fascists, organised on Golwalkarian ideology. Only a movement of awakened and organised workers can given them a fitting reply. The pseudo-*Hindutvawadis* want to replace the pseudo-secular State with an openly fascist State, while the working and toiling people want to replace

it with a genuine people's democracy which will serve the working and toiling people.

To our working and toiling brethren who are learning every day from their struggles of life, we say — frauds cannot be fought with the ideology of other frauds. For that, it is necessary to use the weapon of truth against all frauds. We can win the moral right to oppose those who are misusing the name of religion to protect the exploiters' interests only when we also oppose those who are misusing the name of secularism to protect the interests of the exploiters. While striking at the economic fortresses of the reactionaries, *viz.*, the trusts controlled by the communalists, we must also simultaneously strike at the pseudo-secularism of this State, which helps these reactionaries to strengthen their economic muscle power and gain social prestige and respectability through their trusts. While fighting the fascists who plan to impose a most brutal dictatorship over the working masses, we must also expose the nature of our present bourgeois democratic State which has all along patronised fascists belonging to every community. It is only when we launch a double attack on the ideology and the deeds of both — the Golwalkarians and also the Nehruvians, who created the grounds for their advances — that we can sharpen our weapons, that alone can protect the working and toiling people, and take our struggle forward.

BJP leaders are boasting today that elections during the past forty years have primarily been a contest between the Congress vs the non-Congress parties. But the 1991 elections showed a new picture, that of the BJP vs. the non-BJP parties. True, but we say that these electoral fights — rather matches — are also in a way pseudo-matches. When the awakened working and toiling people wage a war against the exploiters and their State, a truly new picture of our country will emerge. It will then be the working people versus the Congress and the BJP.



Can the BJP's *Ekta Yatra* unite the country?

CULTURAL nationalism has been the most important ideological foundation of the RSS-BJP-VHP. This cultural nationalism asserted aggressively and militantly by the combine attracts not only Hindus but also Christians and Muslims, especially when the unity and integrity of the country is threatened by secessionist and civil strife. The Hindutvawadis cannot be ideologically defeated by merely dubbing them communal. It is necessary to expose and challenge their cultural nationalism. Will this cultural nationalism unite the country or lead to its break up? Which is the cultural tradition of India which can unite the working and toiling people of our country? The editorial below written in the wake of the BJP's *Ekta Yatra* in January 1992, is an attempt to answer these important questions.

S EVEN years ago in 1984, Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party won an unprecedented victory in the Lok Sabha elections claiming to protect the unity and integrity of the country. Seven years later, after countless terrorist killings and kidnappings, after three states Kashmir, Punjab and Assam have virtually been converted into police camps, nobody believes the Congress(I)'s claim — not even the Prime Minister who himself admitted this to *Frontline* in an interview, September 14-27, 1991. As the pretensions of one trickster of the ruling classes has got exposed, another one is busy being propped up to take its place. On December 11, 1991, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, president of the BJP began with great fanfare his *Ekta Yatra* from Kanyakumari in the south, to culminate on 26 January 1992 with the hoisting of the national flag at Srinagar in the north.

Please note, the same BJP which is pontificating on *ekta* today, is the same BJP which had last year launched a *Rath Yatra* in order to demolish the Babri Masjid, leaving in its trail wailing widows and traumatized orphans in some of the most bloody communal riots since 1947. The same BJP which is moralising on national integration today, is the same BJP which had last year scribbled the most blood-curling slogans on the walls of the country — *Babar ki santano se khoon ki holi khelenge* (Children of Babar, we will play holi with your blood). The same BJP which is today preaching about the unifying role of our national culture is the same BJP which had Sadhvi Ritambara mouth the most foul abuses against the Muslims last year.

So startling is the evidence which exposes the hollow pretensions of the BJP's *Ekta Yatra*, that the yatra should have been contemptuously laughed out of every village and town. And yet ironically thousands of people have greeted Dr. Joshi's air-conditioned Toyota in every town and village. In some places people have patiently waited throughout the cold night to have a glimpse of the *yatri*. In Kerala not just Hindus, but also Christians and Muslims lined the route to greet the BJP motorcade. **How is this contradiction to be explained?** How come professional Muslim-haters are greeted by Muslims? How come minority-baiters are welcomed by Christians? How come instigators of riots in which

even Hindus have lost their lives are welcomed by Hindus? How come disrupters and disintegrators are greeted as unifiers and integrators? Can it be explained merely by the huge money-power put at the disposal of the BJP, by the Singhania, the Viren Shahs, the Marvari traders and the former Rajas and Rajmatas? Can it be explained merely by the organisational prowess of the trained RSS cadres at the disposal of the *Ekta Yatra*? We think it is something much, much more. And what is this much more? **It is the power of the BJP's nationalist ideology.** It is this ideology which is an irresistible attraction, especially today, at a time when the country is being threatened by secession; when civil strife and economic insecurity threaten not only the survival of the masses but also the cushy careers and bank balances of the middle classes; when the opportunism and corruption of the centrist parties like the Congress(I) and Janata Dal, have filled the masses with revulsion and despair; when the Left and democratic forces have been ideologically and organisationally unable to provide a revolutionary alternative to the present exploiter parties. It is the BJP's nationalist ideology which attracts people like a magnet, as they become aware that the Congress(I)'s sham secularism has given the country communal riot after riot. It is the BJP's nationalist ideology which pulls people to itself as they begin realising that the Congress(I)'s claim to protect the unity and integrity of the country has engendered secessionism and terrorism. Like a traveller lost in the desert, thirsting for water, our people are being drawn to a mirage — the nationalism of the BJP. Only fools can dismiss this urge and attraction as the foolishness of the masses. We take it seriously and that is why we do not believe in dismissing this nationalist ideology as merely communalism or reactionary, as sections of the Left are doing. We believe we should understand its power, its magic spell, its fatal attraction, in order to demystify and defeat it.

There are five pillars which constitute the different elements of the BJP's nationalist ideology, which enables it to trumpet as the only party capable of keeping the country

united. We shall examine only the first of these, in this issue.

Every RSS-BJP ideologue never tires of repeating that a people and a nation can only be united on the basis of its national culture. And what for them is the essence of our national culture? For the RSS-BJP it is our Hinduness. As Jay Dubashi writing in the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* (December 8, 1991) states "Take away Hinduness from Indian culture and you have a big zero, a big hole at its very heart." For the RSS-BJP, the greatest sin of the Congress(I) has been its denial of our Hinduness and consequently its failure to unite the country on the basis of our national culture.

What is the promise held out by the BJP? It has been to unite our country on the basis of our national culture — on the basis of militant *Hindutva*. As Dr. Joshi proclaimed, "If there is anyone who is uniting our masses, it is us. We are uniting the masses on the basis of *Hindutva* — **not in a narrow religious sense, but in a wide geo-cultural sense.** It was this cultural tradition that created a sense of unity in India, thousands of years ago. Therefore if nationalist sentiments have to be aroused even today, we (the BJP-VHP) believe it can only be based on the tradition of militant Hindu culture and it is on this basis that we are stoking the fires of nationalism in lakhs of youth." (emphasis ours). In short, for the BJP there can be no nationalism and nation-building unless that nation is rooted in its culture, which in India they call *Hindutva*.

That is why to the RSS-BJP cadres there is no contradiction whatsoever between the *Rath Yatra* which instigated a trail of communal riots last year and the *Ekta Yatra* this year. For the RSS-BJP, the *Rath Yatra* was a symbol of the resurgence of militant *Hindutva* and the unity of the country is only possible by this resurgence of our ancient culture and heritage. Thus the two yatras complement each other. (We are deliberately taking pains to explain the BJP's line because many Left ideologues talk without even understanding the logic and power behind the arguments of the RSS-BJP.)

Let's examine what the RSS-BJP is saying a little closely. Did the people of the Indian sub-continent ever share a unique, common, dominant, culture which united our Indian society, although this society was divided among innumerable rajas, maharajahs and even nawabs? Yes, there was a unique, common, dominant culture which 'united' our society from ancient times and we would even be prepared to call it *Hindutva*, in the geo-cultural sense, if it satisfies the RSS-BJP. But pray, can the RSS ideologues inform us what was the essence, the soul of this dominant culture? Ram Goel, an RSS ideologue, in a fit of honesty let the cat out of the bag in an article titled, "The Five Dimensions of our National Vision" published in *Organiser*, Jan 8, 1984. Thus spoke the guru, **"The Varnashrama Dharma which has shaped this great society has been corrupted today into a single English word — the caste system — which everybody is busy accusing of all sorts of crimes. But it was Varnashrama Dharma which created a complex social system that has survived till today with vitality and vigour."** Here in a few words we have the essence of our unique culture which dominated our society from ancient times — the caste system. As Ram Goel would have put it: Take away *Varnashrama Dharma* from our Hinduness and you have a big zero, a big hole at its very heart.

Who unified this complex social system of 'this great society'? Obviously, it could not be the Kshatriyas who were at constant war with each other, or the Vaishyas who were localised, or the Shudras who were suppressed and tied to a village. This complex social system was unified through its priesthood, viz. the Brahmin elite, and the language of this elite — Sanskrit, was the first 'all-India language'. Constantly mobile throughout the length and breadth of *Bharatvarsh*, sometimes seeking patronage of one king, sometimes of another, the Brahmin elite was truly the first all-India caste, with an 'all-India vision', even before India as a political entity could be born. That is why the Brahmin-dominated RSS hysterically insists that *Bharatvarsh* was a nation since time immemorial, although this very *Bharatvarsh* was dissected into innumerable kingdoms, each

one at constant war with the other. As Shri Balasaheb Deoras, Sarsanghchalak of the RSS in a letter to Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, dated December 6, 1991, writes, "A Hindu nation exists here from time immemorial. On the strength of this noble culture we have to date faced many calamities successfully, to preserve the integrity of our nation." Note how for the Brahmin elite what is primary in a nation is not its political unity (*Bharatvarsh* was then politically divided) but its strait-jacket cultural life, and ***Varnashrama* was the essence of this cultural life.** To the Brahmin elite, *Varnashrama* created *Bharatvarsh*, because it was *Varnashrama*, this complex social system that kept him in heredity on the top of the pyramid and allowed him to develop his 'national vision'.

In the same letter to Dr. Joshi, the RSS supremo says, "Our country has been blessed from very ancient times with a noble cultural-national life that is conducive to the welfare of all humanity."

Now, now, this is stretching the 'national vision' a bit too far. With due deference to the RSS Sarsanghchalak and our 'noble cultural-national life', may we point out that this cultural-national life was conducive to the welfare of only those to whom it gifted a 'national vision', *viz.* the elite born from the 'mouth of Brahma'. It can only be plain arrogance and deceit to equate the welfare of a tiny elite in ancient India as the welfare of all humanity! It was this cultural-national life, that poured molten lead in the ears of the Shudras for daring to even hear the Vedas and cut off their tongues for reciting them. It was this cultural-national life that cut the thumb of the Eklavyas for becoming skilled in the use of arms. It was this cultural-national life that prompted Tulsidas to group women with drums, morons, Shudras and cattle, as objects fit to be beaten. It was this cultural-national life that condemned millions of Dalit girls to become devdasis, *i.e.* temple prostitutes. It was this cultural-national life which stretched from Kashmir to Kanyakumari which exploited the Mahars, the Mangs, the Telis, Malis, Kolis, artisans and other backward castes for the benefit of a handful of rajas, maharajahs, sardars, priests and even Muslim nawabs — a culture that sanctified harems and child

sacrifice, a culture which glorified brutality and rape, a culture whose high priest was Manu. To the RSS, this cultural-national life was and is noble and woe to the anti-nationalist who "is busy ascribing all sorts of crimes" to it!

Did the *Varnashrama Dharma* unite Indian society? Yes, in the same way as the walls of a prison unite both the warders and the jailed. Did this prison-house unite the minds and hearts of the people of *Bharatvarsh* or did it divide them? Did it lead to the political unity of *Bharatvarsh* or did it divide it into kingdoms at constant war with each other? Could it prevent Islam and Christianity from converting millions of low-caste Hindus who were thirsting for equality? Could it prevent the British, French and Portuguese colonists from enslaving our country? Our RSS ideologues know the answers to these questions and these answers are embarrassing for them. They can only console themselves by pointing "at the vitality and vigour" of *Varnashrama Dharma* — a dharma so strong that even Islam and Christianity in India were absorbed into the caste system, so that even today we have 'low-caste' Christians and 'low-caste' Muslims. No wonder the RSS does not use the word *Hindutva* "in the narrow religious sense but in a wide geo-cultural sense." In short, even a Christian or Muslim can be a Hindu if he does not renounce his 'ancient culture and heritage', i.e. his *Varnashrama Dharma*.

We know that a number of honest and idealistic RSS members will claim that they are sincerely involved in reforming Hindu society and the *Varnashrama Dharma*. They will even point out that the Ram Janmabhoomi temple foundation was laid by a "harijan". But this show of equality cannot fool anybody, and certainly not the Dalits! On the one hand a Dalit lays the foundation stone of a temple, while on the other hand millions of Dalits are denied entry into temples by the very pujaris and swamis who patronise the VHP. It is crystal clear that all this generosity is meant to use the Dalits and adivasis as cannon fodder against the Muslims as well as against the police, CRPF while 'liberating' the Babri Masjid. It is common knowledge today that those who fell victims to the Mulayam Singh Yadav

government's police action during the *kar seva* were mainly Dalits and those of the other backward castes.

If the BJP-VHP is sincerely reforming Hindu society, how come it is tolerating the BJP chief minister of Himachal Pradesh who spent lakhs of rupees of public money in renovating a Manu temple in his state? How come they were silent throughout *Bharatvarsh* when the BJP vice-president Rajmata Vijaye Raje Scindia extolled the virtues of *sati*? How come the BJP in Maharashtra still continues its alliance with the Shiv Sena even after this party openly distributed handbills defaming Kotwal Ambadas Savne who was brutally stoned to death in public because he entered a temple? How come the BJP has attracted like a magnet all the former rajas, maharajahs and rajmatas who were the political patrons of *Varnashrama Dharma* and the cesspools of decadence?

Our honest idealist RSS member believes his Sangh is uniting the Hindus and that this unity is indispensable for the unity of the country. But did *Varnashrama Dharma* ever unite the Hindus? **Or did it unite that society by forcibly keeping intact divisions?** No less than the great sage Swami Vivekananda had this to say about the caste system which institutionalised privileges and inequality, "They who sucked the life-blood of the poor, whose very education was at their expense, whose very power was built on their poverty, were in their turn sold as slaves by hundreds and thousands, their wives and daughters dishonoured, their property robbed for the last 1000 years" (VIII. 330). We ask our honest RSS member to see how the BJP is implementing this *Varnashrama Dharma* in practice wherever it has come to power. Just one example will do. Lakhiram Agarwal, the BJP president of Madhya Pradesh, is the biggest tendu leaf dealer in that state. No sooner did the BJP come to power than the government dissolved the cooperative societies of the tendu leaf gathering adivasis and handed over the entire leaf trade to private traders — an act which meant a rich profit of 80 crore rupees for Lakhiram Agarwal and his cohorts — the other big traders, while the adivasis have been pushed into starvation. Can there be any unity between these impoverished Hindu adivasis and traders like Lak-

hiram Agarwal? There cannot. There can only be *Ekta Yatras* liberally financed by the likes of Lakhiram Agarwal.

For the Ram Goels, *Varnashrama Dharma* was the only feature of our ancient culture and tradition. And yet it was not. **There was another feature equally important and more inspiring which is as much a part of our ancient culture and tradition. This tradition of our culture and heritage arose and grew in opposition, in defiance, in struggle against the oppressive and mindless cruelty and decadence of the *Varnashrama Dharma*. This tradition attempted to reform, break down and at times even reject and revolt against the *Varnashrama Dharma* which epitomised the exploitation and subjugation of man by man. Swami Vivekananda whose life and teachings were directed against such an oppressive *Varnashrama Dharma* succinctly describes this struggle of opposites in our ancient culture in the following words, "Two forces, as it were, are constantly at work, one making caste, and the other breaking caste; in other words, the one making for privilege, the other breaking down privilege."**

Which tradition blazed the most glorious, inspiring and breath-taking chapters of our ancient history? To the Ram Goels it is the *Varnashrama Dharma* which still survives today with vitality and vigour. To Swami Vivekananda it is the tradition that opposed the caste system. As the Swami himself writes, "Whenever privilege is broken down, more and more light and progress come to a race."

Our ancient culture and heritage is rich with this tradition of revolting against privilege in order to break it down. One of the foremost revolutionaries of his times was Gautama Buddha who not only gave up the privileges he had inherited as a prince, but also raised his voice against the cruel *Varnashrama* system which developed in the post Rig-Vedic period. At a time when the Aitareya Brahmana said that "the Vaishyas are the food of the kings who can oppress them at will. The Shudra is a menial who can be dismissed or killed whenever his master so desires," Gautama Buddha rejected the infallibility of the Vedas and formed *Sanghas* (communes) where there was no caste and

property distinctions. It was this that made Buddhism a magnetic force which attracted the oppressed castes to Buddhism.

Let's take another example of this glorious tradition of struggle and revolt against the *Varnashrama Dharma*, namely the tradition of the Lokayats. The Lokayats were uncompromisingly opposed to the caste system and mercilessly attacked all the superstitions and rituals created by the Brahmin elite to enslave both the mind and body of the masses. Even thousands of years ago when the caste system seemed a divinely ordained and natural system, the Lokayats dared to write "Varna and caste distinctions are unscientific and hence cannot be defended." So much were the Lokayats persecuted for their views that nearly all of their writings were destroyed by the then ruling classes.

The BJP-RSS pretend as if our glorious culture was a monolithic whole and refuse to accept that it constituted not just the dominant social system, i.e. caste, but also a struggle to reform, defy and reject this caste system. This struggle manifested itself in every aspect of society, including the sciences. In ancient times our best astronomers, mathematicians and doctors came into direct conflict with the *Varnashrama Dharma* which the RSS-BJP defends. Ayurveda our medicinal science and its practitioners had to face severe opposition from the rabid defenders of the caste system, viz. the elite Brahmins. This is because they opposed religious rites, rituals and the feasting of priests as a means of curing sickness. They opposed untouchability and regarded it as their sacred duty to remove pain and cure any patient, whether he was a Brahmin or a Shudra. That is why Manu the high priest of *Varnashrama Dharma* said that food taken from or given to a doctor is pus!

Our ancient culture is full of thousands of examples where the best sons and daughters of this land fought against privilege, against subjugation, against injustice, against prejudices and oppression. Sri Krishna himself opposes the *vastraharan* (disrobing) of Draupadi and protects her honour at a time when it was customary to gamble away wives like a piece of property and for the winner to do whatever he wished with her. Sant Gynaneshwar translated the Gita in

Marathi so that the right of knowledge and *Bhakti* reserved for only a privileged few became open to the masses. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule opposed the tyranny of the Brahmins in Maharashtra and suffered severe persecutions at their hands in his crusade against caste oppression and the oppression of women. All these great sages, thinkers, mahatmas and heroes are the best representatives of our cultural heritage and **we can only strengthen our people and our country by being rooted in this heritage.**

So much is the RSS-BJP concerned with presenting our ancient culture as a monolithic whole and **in hiding the antagonisms it contained** that they have also begun appropriating all those who revolted against *Varnashrama Dharma*. The same RSS-BJP whose ideologue and founder Guru Golwalkar worshipped Manu, have also begun appropriating Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar. Those who swear by *Varnashrama Dharma* have also begun swearing by Swami Vivekananda. The *Hindutvawadis* claim to be the true *Bhakts* of Sri Krishna and the disciples of Sant Gyaneshwar. But what does their practice show? On October 2, 1991, Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti, BJP hoodlums in Gujarat abused and manhandled central minister Shrimati Mamta Banerjee in the presence of Shri L. K. Advani and even began pulling her saree because she went to garland the statue of Gandhiji before Shri L. K. Advani. Whose heritage is this? Shri Krishna's or Duryodhana's? On numerous occasions fanatic *Hindutvawadis* have attacked Dalits and opposed their struggles for justice and equality. Whose tradition is this? Mahatma Phule's or Manu's? RSS supporters in the bureaucracy have been busy working overtime, Sanskritising our mother tongues so that today even an educated Maharashtrian cannot easily understand a government form supposedly written in Marathi. Is this the tradition of Sant Gyaneshwar or of the self-centered Brahmin elite jealously perpetuating his privileges?

We strongly believe that the masses of our country can only be united today on the basis of our glorious cultural tradition which opposed the caste system, the social oppression of women and the exploitation of the working people. It can only be built by mercilessly opposing all those or-

ganisations and parties who preach about the vitality and vigour of *Varnashrama Dharma*. This is the only road to build the unity of the people and our country. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "the enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege and throughout the ages, the aim of morality has been its destruction. This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity, without destroying variety". (I.435)

The Congress Party which has been ruling our country for more than 40 years has instead of rooting out privilege only institutionalised it in modern form. This has destroyed the unity of our country. Nehruvianism believed that our country could be united through modernisation: modern railways, modern industry, modern shipyards, modern markets, modern research establishments, modern education, modern IITs. **In actual fact this modernisation was not achieved by rooting out privileges and relying on the genius of our people.** It was achieved by perpetuating inequality, and shamelessly begging and borrowing from the imperialists, who 'modernised' our country in order to plunder it more systematically. What kind of culture did this type of 'modernisation' generate? It generated a pseudo modern culture. A culture in which the elite studied at Harvard and Cambridge, but came back to India to marry for a fat dowry. A culture in which professors lectured against the caste system but promptly disowned their children if they married outside their caste. A culture in which our educated intelligentsia sneer at the 'backwardness' of India in the presence of Europeans and yet rigorously follow all rituals and superstitions in private. A culture which has the sons of the rich, washing cars, dishes and what not in the USA, but back home in India insist on a battery of servants to serve them.

In short, Nehruvianism produced a **schizophrenic** culture. Modern trappings outside, but the soul of Manu beating inside. We have seen Messrs Goel and company vouching for it by swearing that the *Varnashrama Dharma* "has survived till today with vitality and vigour". It's vitality can be attested from the fact that even in the last decade of the 20th century, Dalits are forced to eat human excreta

for demanding higher wages from the landlords; in the fact that Dalits have been beaten and murdered for daring to sit on a horse on their marriage day; in the fact that hundreds of girls are still offered as devdasis every year in this time and age; in the fact that Dalits are still denied the right to enter a temple or even fill water from a public well; in the fact that thousands of women are burnt alive in dowry deaths not by our 'backward masses' but by the educated intelligentsia.

But Messrs Goel and company unlike the Nehruites realise that a schizophrenic culture leads to the disintegration of the educated intelligentsia (most of them upper class Brahmins). So what's their cure? Simple! Why be ashamed of superstitions and rituals? Popularise them and perform them in public. Did not L. K. Advani accept urns of human blood on his *Rath Yatra*! Why be ashamed of the caste system and ascribe to it all sorts of crimes (like the Leftists are doing today)? *Garv se kaho, hum Hindu hain!* Why be repulsed by untouchability? Follow the example of the Shiv Sena who publicly cleaned the Martyrs' Memorial in Bombay with *Go-mutra* (cow's urine) after a Dalits morcha 'polluted' the memorial with its presence! Why pretend in public that women should be emancipated while secretly beating your wife in private? Uphold the Sita-Savitri tradition and glorify *sati*! Such are supposed to be the miraculous powers of *Hindutva* to cure the schizophrenia created by Congress culture! Are not thousands of yuppies converting into scuppies (saffron-clad yuppies)? Has not the BJP become the darling of non-resident Indians as well as our resident non-Indians?

But there is a small snag which the ideologues of the RSS have overlooked. BJP scuppyism may cure the schizophrenia of our Congress-created yuppyism. Our advertising whiz-kids may even make *Manu* the zing thing. But will all this cure the schizophrenia racking our society? The scuppies may take pride in being backward, but after Mandal the 'backward castes' are determined to go forward. The Dalit is saying "to hell with your *Varnashrama Dharma*" while the worker and the landless are already tired of paying for the sins they committed in their previous life. So while the elite clings to the dominant and dominating aspects of our

ancient culture and heritage, the Dalits and all other toiling people are being propelled to its opposite pole — the pole which has throughout history opposed privileges. **Between these two opposing poles there can only be struggle, and only in the break up of this schizophrenic India will the New India arise.** In the words of Swami Vivekananda, this New India will arise “out of the peasants cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper”. It will spring “from the grocer’s shop, from beside the oven of the fritter seller. It will emanate from the factory, from marts and markets, from groves and forests, from hills and mountains.”

Will the *Hindutvawadis* tolerate the renaissance of this New India?



Opposition's *swadeshi* slogan — a diversion!

AS the IMF-dictated New Economic Policies completely open the economy to foreign capital, a section of the RSS parivar has put forward the slogan of *swadeshi*. By whipping up economic nationalism, this slogan aims to attract the thousands of small and middle capitalists who are being throttled by foreign competition. It is meant to win over to the side of the Parivar all those affected by the Cargills and Dunkels. What is the political significance of this slogan today? Is it against the exploitation of our country by imperialist finance capital? The article below written in May 1992, addresses itself to these questions.

EVERY slogan of the bourgeoisie, however powerful, noble or patriotic its outward sound, has been turned into a parody by history. In 1906, *swadeshi* the slogan of the Indian bourgeoisie, breathed new life into the freedom struggle and captured the imagination of an enslaved people. After 1947, it was destined to become a cruel joke in the hands of the Congress Party, whose leaders still sported khadi in public, while opening Swiss bank accounts in private.

Before the Indian bourgeoisie came to State power, *swadeshi* attracted thousands of men and women of character and integrity willing to undergo jail, sacrifices and even martyrdom. Gandhi not only preached *swadeshi* but himself wore a loin cloth spun with his own hands. After the same bourgeoisie came to power, *swadeshi* attracted swindlers, crooks, hypocrites and the corrupt who pretend to spin with a *charkha* in one hand while spinning with the other hand a deadly web around the banking system and the stock markets!

Now however, with the open take-over of the Indian economy by the IMF, the Congress Party has for all practical purposes given up the slogan of *swadeshi*. But that is not going to be the end of the matter.

Just when the Congress Party has confined *swadeshi* to the

dungheap of history, a large section of the opposition, viz. the BJP and the Janata Dal, have scraped into that dung heap to resuscitate and revive the slogan of *swadeshi*. The HMKP led by the Janata Dal has under the banner of the Azadi Bachao Andolan organised countrywide demonstrations, dharnas and the burning of foreign goods. The RSS-BJP has launched a more straightforward *swadeshi* andolan which calls upon the people to boycott the goods of select foreign companies and to buy the goods of select Indian companies. (Straight-forward, because at least no attempt has been made by them to hide their patrons.)

Why is the opposition so bent on repeating history — this time however as a farce? The reason is not difficult to understand. **The New Economic Policy of the Narasimha Rao**

government and its sordid implementation of the IMF diktat has already begun pinching a section of the bourgeoisie where it hurts.

The scrapping of industrial licensing in most industries, the vigorous wooing of foreign capital and multinationals and the lowering of import duties to facilitate foreign capital imports, have overnight opened the hitherto protected Indian industry to ruthless foreign competition. Giant companies like Reliance have begun complaining of dumping by multinationals. Public sector units like BHEL are in the doldrums as the government starves them of orders and instead patronises foreign companies. Indian drug manufacturers have broken into a cold sweat at the prospect of the government capitulating to U.S. pressures to amend the Patents Act. Dunkel, TRIMS and TRIPS hang like a Damocles sword over the heads of those who swore by Nehruvian socialism. The Indian banking and insurance industry have begun having nightmares at the vision of foreign banks and insurance companies openly competing in the Indian market. Thousands of small-scale industries are facing bankruptcy as a result of high interest rates and government policies which have opened up this sector to competition from big units and even foreign capital.

Thus we are witness to one of the bitterest ironies in recent times. A significant section of the bourgeoisie, who welcomed liberalisation in the first place, has now begun realising that liberalisation is not all that free. **As such a bourgeoisie is more and more displaced by foreign capital in his own home market, he suddenly remembers his lessons in patriotism and nationalism.** He nostalgically remembers the *swadeshi* movement launched by Tilak and Gandhi and dreams of a huge bonfire which will consume the products of all his rivals.

And yet, such a bourgeoisie suffers from a schizophrenia which it cannot escape. He hates his foreign competitor and yet he is not opposed to the penetration of imperialist finance capital in India. He is not opposed to foreign collaborations. He is opposed to his rival upstaging him with the help of a foreign collaborator. He is not opposed to multinationals. He is upset when his competitor beats him to

the punch and teams up with a multinational to squeeze him out of the market. In short, he wants to sit in the lap of imperialism and from there preach to the masses about the virtues of *swadeshi*. He wants to send his wife to Hong Kong to buy a toothbrush, but insists that we be *swadeshi* and use Vicco Vajradanti toothpaste. He pontificates about nationalism when his ideal in life is to be a non-resident Indian.

The neo-*Swadeshites* in the BJP and the Janata Dal are fine tuning their act to appeal to this schizophrenic bourgeoisie. A bourgeoisie which in one breath applauds the 'reforms' of the Congress(I) but with another breath shouts *swadeshi*, when these reforms get too hot for it. And in order to do this fine tuning, the neo-*Swadeshites* cannot but help being schizophrenic, like the class they seek to represent.

Thus the seeming paradox of the BJP-RSS proudly claiming in one breath that the Congress(I) has adopted the economic policies of deregulation and decontrol which the BJP propagated all these years and in the next breath launching a fraudulent *Swadeshi* andolan against these policies. Thus the hypocrisy of Advani praising the new economic policies of the Rao government in Brussels and Washington, while *Organiser*, the RSS mouthpiece, carries articles on economic imperialism and recolonisation. Pepsi Cola is invited into the country by three successive governments and then the masses are told the virtues of *limbu pani*. In short, foreign capital is welcomed into the country by our neo-*Swadeshites*, and then to cover up this sell-out, the masses who are living from hand to mouth are told to boycott foreign goods.

To all such *Swadeshites* we say "Stop fooling the people. Sell your *swadeshi* clap-trap to your own sons who cannot walk without Lotto shoes or to your own daughters who can only smile with Close-Up toothpaste. Look around your own homes and you will find out how *swadeshi* are your tiles, taps, switches, music and television sets, washing machines and cordless telephones!"

A Parody

What makes the present *swadeshi* movement of the BJP and the Janata Dal a parody of the original *swadeshi* struggle launched by Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi is not just the pathetic credentials of our present leaders, but also the pathetic state to which the 'nationalistic' Indian bourgeoisie has been reduced to.

The original *swadeshi* movement and the boycott of foreign goods was proclaimed on August 7, 1905, when India was **under foreign colonial rule**; when this colonial rule produced such monstrosities like the forcible partition of Bengal, then the centre of the political movement in India; when the colonial government in response to the demands of the Lancashire manufacturers removed all duties on cotton imports into India to throttle the nascent textile industry of the Indian manufacturers. The boycott of foreign goods, then, though a weapon of the Indian manufacturers against their English rivals, nevertheless served to awaken the masses to political action and galvanise them against colonialism.

Just consider how things have changed today. Today we are not subjected to direct colonial rule. We have an elected government and an elected opposition, most of whom are elected with the money power and muscle power of the bourgeoisie itself. This elected government which is **a minority government implements its liberalisation and globalisation policies with the overt and covert help of the parliamentary opposition itself**. An IMF loan is accepted with all the slavish conditionalities and still the minority government wins a vote of confidence. Further doses of IMF installments and further implementation of more conditionalities still sees the minority government not only surviving, but also thriving. The new industrial policies, new financial policies and new trade policies opening up the Indian economy to foreign competition are passed with the bourgeoisie applauding the government and goading it further. Import duties are slashed in the last budget, and despite all the accusations of the opposition that the government has sold the sovereignty of the country, the budget gets 'miraculously' passed by a minority government. And then,

while all these parties are busy compromising and wheeling-dealing in the seats of power, we the masses are called upon by them to boycott foreign goods and turn to *swadeshi* in order to save the country. Could there have been a bigger farce, a greater parody of *swadeshi*? Is it surprising that if the first *swadeshi* movement gave birth to *swaraj*, the second has given birth to the Swaraj Pauls!

During the first *swadeshi* movement launched by Tilak and Gandhi, the toiling masses actively participated, even though a *swadeshi* mill owner never paid his *swadeshi* worker one anna more in the name of Indian brotherhood. The fundamental and burning issue then was freedom and any weapon which weakened the colonial ruler was a step forward. In contrast, the present farce of a *swadeshi* movement is not even directed to throw out this treacherous Congress government, leave alone usher in a genuine anti-imperialist government with an anti-imperialist programme.

Hence, it would be short-sightedness for all those struggling for the interests of the toiling masses, to give their unconditional and uncritical support to the present *swadeshi* movement. **For one, this *swadeshi* movement is not against imperialism although it may appear to be so. It is not against the plunder of our country by imperialist finance capital.** This *swadeshi* movement is only squeaking against the prospect of our bourgeoisie losing the last vestiges of control over the Indian home market. Hence it is constantly complaining about India losing its economic sovereignty, while it maintains a deathly silence against the plunder of our country by imperialism.

Imperialist finance capital — the real enemy

Imperialist finance capital plunders our country through the huge foreign debt, which this year alone has to be serviced to the tune of more than Rs. 16,000 crore, through cheap exports. It plunders our country through the continuous downward slide of the rupee which cheapens our exports and makes our imports more and more expensive. (The rupee's value has been steadily adjusted downward from Rs. 7.91 per U.S. Dollar in May 1981 to Rs. 30 in May 1992).


Imperialist finance capital loots our country by extorting monopoly prices for the capital goods, India imports, while major domestic machinery suppliers like BHEL remain idle. (Capital goods import increased from Rs. 1,910 crore in 1980–81 to Rs. 8,831 crore in 1989–90.) One example to prove the extent of monopoly prices paid for the imports of capital goods by multinationals. Pepsi's import bill for its chips line, its packaging line and extruded product line came to US \$4.8 million while the same lines were imported by another firm for US \$1.34 million. (*Aspects of Indian Economy*, Vol. 3). In every foreign collaboration, imperialist finance capital robs our country under the guise of technical know-how, royalty payments, dividends, etc. According to the Reserve Bank of India, remittances to foreign companies increased from Rs. 106 crore in 1975–76 to Rs. 813.50 crore in 1986–87. The number of foreign collaborations per year grew from 389 in 1981 to 1024 in 1985 and remained between 800 and 1000 thereafter.

Imperialist finance capital loots the people of this sub-continent by instigating one country against another, providing an excuse to our ruling classes to increase military expenditure, a large amount of which is spent in buying foreign arms at monopoly prices. India's rulers are one of the world's largest arms importers spending about Rs. 6,319 crore in 1988–89 itself on foreign arms and that too before devaluation.

The neo-Swadeshites in the BJP and JD do not utter a word of condemnation against these various forms of imperialist plunder. No *rath yatra* has been organised against this rape of our motherland. Their party programmes or resolutions have never opposed this foreign loot. Have you ever heard of the BJP or even the JD demanding the cancellation of the foreign debt and the immediate stopping of all interest payments? Have they ever raised their voices against the colossal sums of money spent by our ruling classes and the ruling classes of our neighbouring countries on buying the most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction? Examine the manifestos of the neo-Swadeshites and you will find not one word which threatens to pluck even one hair of imperialist finance capital.

We repeat: **The working class has to oppose the plunder of our country by imperialist finance capital.** It is this struggle which is primary to the interests of the toiling masses rather than the half-hearted 'struggle' of the Indian bourgeoisie to preserve its control over the Indian market. **It is because the Indian ruling classes have never opposed the plunder of imperialist finance capital that they are losing today whatever control they have had over the Indian home market.** It is only because the Indian ruling classes have accepted and implemented IMF conditionalities, rather than unilaterally cancelling the foreign debt, that today domestic industry is being squeezed out of the Indian market. And now when they are losing this control, the neo-*Swadeshites* instead of opposing imperialist finance capital, are only indulging in mock fights to frighten off their foreign rivals in the Indian market.

The first *swadeshi* movement culminated in 1947 when our exploiter classes were handed over political power by the British in exchange for the protection of imperialist plunder of our people and country. The toiling masses were betrayed once. Will they allow themselves to be duped by the same trick again?



Using Shri Ram against *Roti and Insaaf!*

PROPOSING solutions to solve the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue has become a national pastime for a large section of secularists. All sorts of solutions from converting the site into a national monument to building a multi-religious shrine have been proposed. In June 1992, while the liberal secularists were involved in this form of escapism, the Sangh Parivar with its feet on the ground was preparing for the next round of communal mobilisation, which culminated with the breaking of the Babri Masjid. This editorial, published when the atmosphere was being charged again, proposes a very different kind of "solution". A "solution" addressed not to our rulers but to the people!

IF there is one fact that needs noting about the BJP-VHP combine, it is its sense of timing. This unholy alliance may pretend that the timings of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement are ordained to match the Hindu religious calendar and yet it is a fact that every time the mandir campaign has been timed, it is to suit the political weather.

In October 1989, the BJP-VHP began its first all-India campaign to break the masjid and build the Ram Mandir. Bricks were consecrated in lakhs of villages culminating in the famous *Shilanyas* held with the permission of the then Rajiv government. This whipping up of mass hysteria **was scheduled to coincide with the Lok Sabha elections.** The timing paid rich dividends. The BJP increased its seats in the Lok Sabha from a meagre 2 to 88!

The second wave of mass frenzy unleashed by the BJP-VHP about a year later was **to serve as a counter-campaign against the decision of the V.P. Singh government to reserve 27 per cent of seats for the backward castes.** Again the timing reflected Machiavellian planning. Advaniji launched his *Rath Yatra* which culminated not in the building of the temple, but in the breaking of the V.P. Singh government — a government which if it had continued for long would have shifted the balance of political forces in favour of the backward castes. The *Rath Yatra* successfully subverted this possibility.

And now we have witnessed once again the *Chanakyan* sense of timing in the third campaign unleashed recently, to build the Ram Mandir. A number of big banks, four of them foreign banks, together with a few cutthroat brokers had succeeded in diverting more than Rs. 2.75 lakh crore from the banking system into speculation, hoarding and black-marketeering to squeeze mind-boggling profits. Millions of Hindus have been reduced to poverty and penury as a result of the skyrocketing inflation unleashed by such plunder. Thousands and thousands have lost jobs because credit was starved to industry and diverted into speculation, or because money was diverted from production, into the stock markets. All it needed for our great *Rashtravadis* and *Hindutvawadis* in the opposition to do was to launch a mass campaign against the perpetrators of the scam, especially

the Narasimha Rao government which has sold our country to the foreign banks. But we saw no such thing. Instead, our *Hindutvawadis* with their uncanny sense of timing launched a mass *Kar Seva* programme to build the temple precisely at the time when public attention was riveted on the greatest scam in recent times. **Within a few days, the temple replaced the scam as the hottest news.** The Allahabad Court became more important than the Special Court trying Harshad Mehta. The Narasimha Rao government instead of being in the dock has emerged as the great peace-maker.

The devout Hindus have a right to ask the self-proclaimed champions of Hinduism: Is Shri Ram meant to be cynically used by the BJP to come to power — a party which harbours in its ranks alleged rapists like Vinay Khatiyar and Dalit lynchers like Krishnandar Kaur Deepa? Is Shri Ram to be cynically used to subvert any social reform which aims to loosen the stranglehold of the upper caste elites on jobs, education and power? Is Shri Ram meant to be cynically used to divert the attention of the masses from the ruthless plunder of our motherland by the imperialists? Is Shri Ram meant to be used to divert our people from their struggles for *roti* and *insaaf*?

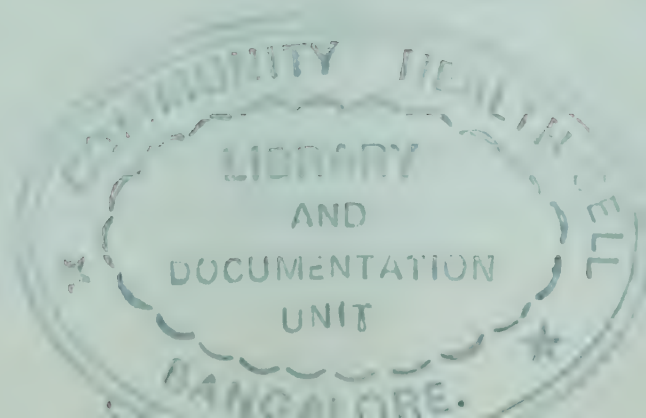
Just as the Babri Masjid is no more a place of *namaz* or worship but a structure to be cynically used by Muslim fundamentalists to generate distrust, fear and suspicion towards the Hindus, so also the proposed Ram Mandir is being engineered not to become a place of *puja* and prayer, but a hotbed unleashing friction, conflict and hatred towards the Muslims. In fact a section of the ruling classes are desperately working towards converting the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid complex into a permanent spot of conflict and communal hatred, very much how the imperialists have made Kashmir into a permanent arena of war between India and Pakistan. These sores can then be infected at will so that the pus that flows out can infect the people, divert their attention, divide them, instigate fratricidal warfare. Yesterday it was to make the BJP the main opposition party. Today it is to divert attention from

the plunder of the people by four foreign banks. Maybe tomorrow in order to bring the fascists to power!

The Parliamentary Left and liberal secularists have been working overtime to propose 'solutions' to our rulers. At one time the 'solution' was a national monument. Today some are proposing that a magnificent temple be built next to the Babri Masjid. Of what use are such 'solutions' when neither the Hindu nor the Muslim fundamentalists are interested in prayer and worship? Will not the national monument or the temple next to the Babri Masjid be converted into a permanent sore generating riots and hatred?

If there is a way out of this communal madness, the key lies with the people and to them we appeal. To the millions of devout Hindus we say, "Recognise the real face of those who claim to be the champions of Hinduism. STOP following them. Condemn them to be leaders without followers." To the millions of devout Muslims we say, "Don't be taken in by those who claim to be the defenders of Islam and the protectors of the Babri Masjid. STOP following them. Condemn them to be leaders without followers."

The moment we the people do this, the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue will die a natural death. Shri Ram and Allah will then be worshiped in the hearts of men and not in structures built over the corpses of our children.



Ayodhya — a glimpse of backstage reality!

ARE the Hindutvawadis and the Muslim fundamentalists arch- enemies as they pose to be? Or are their leaderships united at the top? This article by Amita Kanekar published in September 1992, provides us a glimpse of backstage reality.

The two sides rush at each other and clash thunderously. The entire stage, no, the entire auditorium, shudders with the violence of their bloodthirsty war-cries. End of Act. I. The actors retire backstage, slap each other on the back, work out the next act.

Act II : The battle rages on, even more bitterly, even more realistically

This isn't a play being performed at some *Natya Mandir*. This stage is Ayodhya, the auditorium is India. The performance is by the BJP-VHP-RSS leadership, entering from one side, and the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC), entering from the other. Before us, the people of India.

The most recent Act in the show was the focus of the nation's attention this July. What the same month also provided was, however, something that most people must have missed — a brief glimpse of backstage reality. A glimpse of the real relationship between those who claim to be bitter enemies.

On July 17, the Calcutta daily, *The Telegraph*, carried an explosive report that laid bare this real relationship. It was the report of a letter written by the convener of the BMAC, Shri. Zafaryab Jilani, to the secretary-general of the VHP, Shri. Ashok Singhal. The report was accompanied by a xerox copy of the letter. The letter is a reply to earlier ones written to Shri. Jilani by Shri. Singhal and senior BJP leader and U.P. minister, Shri. Lalji Tandon. Shri. Jilani speaks of a house deal and demands that, "the transaction should be shown as a sale and not a gift" in the agreement. *The Telegraph* explains that the house in question is located in the heart of Lucknow, next door to the RSS area office "Keshav Bhavan", and is being transferred to Shri. Jilani by its owner, RSS sympathiser Shri. Jodha Ram. Shri. Jilani writes that the VHP should carry out the deal expeditiously, to show its "sincerity", and adds that he has done his own job, and "in the future I have promised to co-operate as per our agreed programme." He goes on to urge Mr. Singhal to "deal with the voices of dissent in the rank and file of the VHP about our relations", and warns that "any unwise step by them will not affect me, but they will also stand exposed,

because we are both sailing on the same boat, and thus any sabotage will be equally disastrous for both of us.”

In short, Shri. Jilani confirms the following:

- that he has been gifted a big house by the VHP;
- that he has a close relationship with Shri. Singhal;
- that the VHP and the BMAC are sailing on the same boat!

We are not surprised by this confirmation. There are countless examples to show how these so-called disputants are really in close, amicable and continuous contact behind the scenes. In fact they are not merely good friends, they are completely dependent on each other. After all, without the anti-Muslim hatred and poison spewed by the BJP-VHP-RSS leadership, how would the Muslim fundamentalists ever manage to create fear and insecurity among the Muslim masses, and a need for themselves as protective godfathers? Similarly, without well-publicising the reactionary propaganda and *fatwas* of the Imam Bukharis and the Syed Shahabuddins, how would the self-proclaimed *Hindutvawadis* be able to incite Hindu youth against the ‘backwardness’ and the ‘anti-national’ character of all Muslims? Without each other, the very existence of the fascists would be impossible! Time and again in the past, the curtain hiding the backstage has slipped for a moment, revealing a bloodstained unity thriving on the creation of hatred and the destruction of lives.

For e.g., in 1978, Jamshedpur city was rocked by gory communal riots, in which were later indicted both the RSS and the Jamaat-i-Islami. Just a few days before the riots began, the Jamaat-i-Islami hosted a lavish banquet in the same city in honour of none other than RSS chief Shri. Balasaheb Deoras, where he was presented with a gold pen brought all the way from Saudi Arabia!

A more recent example was the dinner hosted by BJP member of parliament Dr. J. K. Jain last year, in honour of the visiting Adnan Khashoggi, notorious Saudi Arabian arms dealer. Present at the dinner were Shri. Nanaji Deshmukh, top leader of the RSS, and the Naib Imam of the Delhi Jama Masjid. Following an uproar over the incident, Dr. Jain went on record to say that he couldn’t understand what all the fuss was about, after all he had hosted innumerable meet-

ings in the past between Shri. Balasaheb Deoras and Imam Bukhari of the Jama Masjid!

The list can go on. All the examples, including the most recent one, prove one thing — **that there is no need to "bring the two sides together", as Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao has promised to do. Because they are already together.** Together in the vicious aim of dividing Hindus and Muslims, and creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in which both can be easily looted and exploited by their common oppressors!

So we warn all those who have relaxed after hearing the Rao government's promise to solve the dispute in four months — don't be fooled so easily! Already the VHP has started publicising its next move, of holding *paduka*-worship all over the country. The Ayodhya dispute cannot be solved by the Congress(I). Not because the dispute is a highly complex one. But because the disputants **have no interest whatsoever in solving it.** The personal and political interests of both the BJP-VHP-RSS and the BMAC lie in letting the issue simmer on indefinitely as an unbridgeable chasm between Hindus and Muslims. Who can put it better than Shri Lalkrishna Advaniji did, at the recent meeting of the National Integration Council — "How can you expect us to end an issue that has raised our seats in Parliament from 2 to 112?"

If we leave it to these people, they will continue to misuse the religious faith of our people, to tear our society apart with their greed for power. A play doesn't stop running after a fixed number of shows. It repeats itself endlessly, as long as the money keeps rolling in, as long as an audience keeps queueing up. Only the people of India can solve this dispute. We can solve it by refusing to be led by the misusers of religion. By recognising the real face of those who claim to be the champions of Shri Ram and Hinduism, and those who claim to be the champions of Allah and Islam. By condemning both to be leaders without followers! Only in this way can we save our society from being torn apart. Only in this way can we prevent the worship of Shri Ram and Allah from being forever tainted by hatred and murder.

Ayodhya : From “ruins” to ruin!

T HIS article was published in November 1992, a few weeks before the Babri Masjid was demolished. It mercilessly exposes the fraud and danger of the three policies pursued by the government to resolve the Ayodhya issue. Firstly, the policy of bringing the disputants to the negotiating table. Secondly, the policy of using archaeological evidence to find out whether a temple was indeed destroyed. Thirdly, the policy of using the Supreme Court to settle the issue. December 6, 1992, officially certified the bankruptcy of these three policies.

Fifty per cent of the art of bourgeois leadership consists in lobbying on behalf of the exploiter classes within the State machinery and 50 per cent consists in play-acting to befuddle the masses. It matters little to the leadership that after every sordid bout of play-acting, one more principle of the present constitutional order is renounced, one more tenet of the preamble is compromised, one more nail is hammered into the coffin of bourgeois democracy. The present phase of play-acting, going on since the last three months in the Ayodhya dispute is soon coming to an end and now all actors are hectically sharpening their knives to play mayhem with the lives of the masses.

Three months ago, the disputants were brought to the negotiating table by the Narasimha Rao government. This, despite the fact that all negotiations held with the disputants by the Rajiv Gandhi government, the V. P. Singh government and the Chandrashekhar government had failed. However it was necessary for the Rao government to show that it was interested in negotiations and dialogue and not confrontation. On the other hand, it was necessary for the VHP and the AIBMAC to show that it was 'open' enough to give the new government a chance. And so, began the play acting again.

The so-called negotiations continued what the Chandrashekhar government had itself started. Viz. both the disputants exchanged archaeological evidence to prove or disprove claims and counter-claims as to whether or not the masjid was built by breaking a mandir 500 years ago. The bourgeois press hailed the reasonableness of the exercise and the rationality of the disputants despite the fact that what happened 500 years ago in India is as unreal to our people as what will happen after 500 years hence. While archaeological evidence was being dug up, an important principle of secular democracy was being buried in; the principle that real or perceived historical wrongs cannot be redressed by intimidating and humiliating sections of the people. The principle that Muslims of today cannot and should not be made to pay for the crimes committed or alleged to have been committed by Muslim emperors hundreds of years ago. The bourgeois press paid lip service to this

principle and yet hailed the talks. They refused to see that the substance of the negotiations itself was directed towards renouncing the very principle they upheld. Otherwise what is the meaning of trying 'to solve' the dispute by finding out what lay buried under the ground.

The very fact that the government has gone underground, implies that it is willing to act today on the evidence provided by archaeology. Otherwise, why go into history and archaeology? If archaeology 'proves' a temple stood before the masjid was built, then the masjid should be shifted or vice-versa. If this is not proved, then the Ram idols in the masjid should be removed. In other words, archaeology will decide political policy, the past will determine the present, the ghosts of the dead will rule over the living, and today's generation must pay the price for crimes committed in the bygone past. As predictable, the disputants could not reach any common understanding. How could they, whose very existence is based on perpetuating misunderstanding! If archaeologists trained in the scientific method and in objectivity, can fight vehemently over a bit of Harappan pottery, can we expect the VHP and the AIB-MAC representing fanatical *mahants* and *maulvis* to come to an understanding? But mind you in the meanwhile, a principle has been compromised, one of the foundation stones of secular democracy has been prised loose and you cannot loosen one stone without loosening another.

And so now, the archaeological dispute which could not be resolved by the representatives of the long-haired *mahants* and the long-bearded *maulvis* is sought to be resolved with the help of white-wigged justices of the Supreme Court. The Lords of the constitutional order are being called upon to pronounce judgment on an issue where even angels fear to tread. Characteristically, all the trumpeters of the fourth estate have rushed to praise this stroke of 'statesmanship'. Dileep Padgaonkar, editor of *The Times of India*, writes, "For the first time since the Ayodhya dispute took a nasty turn three years ago, the chance of resolving it without bloodshed and within the framework of the Constitution appear to be reasonably bright." (T.O.I. Nov.14, 1992).

A few questions to our worthy editor: What if the Supreme Court judges-turned-popular archaeologists, declare that no temple was desecrated to build the masjid? Will then the editor support the demand of the AIBMAC that the idols of Shri Ram should be removed from the Babri Masjid and all poojas should forthwith be stopped there? And will this strengthen the framework of the Constitution or will it strengthen the *Hindutvawadis* in their struggle to get rid of your republican Constitution? Or let's take the possibility of the judges declaring that indeed a temple was desecrated and a masjid built. Will then the editor support the demand of the VHP that the masjid be removed, if necessary, even by force? And will this strengthen the framework of the Constitution or will it strengthen the Muslim fundamentalists who are already threatening a second partition, if the Babri Masjid is touched?

What our worthy editor is unmindful about is the fact that a **Supreme Court judgment can and will only strengthen the claims of one set of fundamentalists against the other.** And this itself strengthens fundamentalism as a whole — one group claiming victory, the rival group claiming it has been wronged. May be, our worthy editor and others like him desperately require the 'secular' stamp of approval from the Supreme Court, before throwing their weight behind one group of fundamentalists!


But, at least in words, our worthy editor is praying for a happy end — a happy end, that cannot even take place in one's dreams. He is hoping that if the judges pronounce that a temple was desecrated to build the masjid, then the Muslim fundamentalists "will be armed with enough legitimate arguments to persuade its following that the disputed structure must be handed over to the advocates of the Ram Temple." On the other hand, if the Supreme Court decides otherwise, our editor thinks that "the *Hindutva* forces are certain to be thrown on the defensive. They will find it extremely hard to make out a convincing case for 'faith' — if they are to question the legitimacy of the Supreme Court."

Our editor has conveniently forgotten how both the Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists have not only questioned the legitimacy of the Supreme Court, but contemptuously spat

upon its judgments. He has forgotten the Shah Bano case and the *Kar Seva* organised by the VHP in open defiance of court orders. He has forgotten that none of the so-called moderates among the Hindu or Muslim fundamentalists who have accepted to refer the matter to the Supreme Court, have agreed that they will abide by its decision. On the contrary, each of them have put in so many caveats and conditions, that it will make it childishly simple for them to wriggle out of honouring any judgment which is not to their liking. And yet, such is the abiding faith of our liberal democrats in the Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists, that to them the chances of resolving the dispute within the framework of the Constitution, now appear to be reasonably bright.

This is the real tragedy of secularism in India. It does not lie in the so-called intolerance of the Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists for each other. It lies in the abiding faith and trust the liberal democrats have for these fundamentalists. It is this faith and trust that paralyses the intelligentsia from mercilessly questioning the claims of the fundamentalists to speak on behalf of their communities; from exposing that the fundamentalists can only widen their mass bases, not by solving disputes, but by creating them, by exacerbating them, by drawing and disintegrating within its quicksand every institution of parliamentary democracy.

The tragedy of secularism in India is not the so-called backwardness of the masses, but the real backwardness and treachery of this intelligentsia which can see but pretends to be blind, which insists on deluding itself and the people. An intelligentsia that constantly subordinates long-term principles for short-term gains, reducing the struggle against fundamentalism to petty games of real politic, bending every institution of parliamentary democracy to suit the fundamentalists. This intelligentsia is fated to itself dig the grave of the very constitutional order on which it is perched today.



From Centrism to Fascism!

T HIS editorial written after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, analyses why the centrist parties are unable to halt the growth of the Hindutvawadi forces. It shows how all centrist 'solutions' which vacillate between what is called the soft line and the hard line are trapped on the horns of a dilemma and are hence doomed to fail. More important, it exposes how the centrist parties themselves are paving the way for fascism!

DECEMBER 6, 1992, has traumatised our country. Not since the partition of our motherland in 1947 has there been anything as macabre and deliberate as the frenzied demolition of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and the violence unleashed in its wake. Throughout the length and breadth of the country, the majority of Hindus have been revolted, the Muslims have been shocked, while all those committed to democracy and secularism have been shaken and disoriented.

What especially has chilled the spine of the people is how the RSS-BJP-VHP which was defensive and apologetic on December 6, bounced back into the political arena with their aggressive posturing and mass mobilisation **within 24 hours after their diabolical act**. Despite subverting the constitution and judiciary and unleashing the most heinous communal riots, this combine literally forced a Bharat bandh on December 9, not just to protest against the arrest of their leaders, but to serve a warning that they are invincible. This is where the greatest psychological danger lies for the Left and Democratic forces. The belief that the fascists are invincible. It is this belief which the fascists are bent on spreading today because they know that all those who internalise this belief will either be paralysed or silenced or worse still, capitulate to them. It is a tribute to our people and country, that as fascism begins to reveal its ugly face, thousands of workers, students, women, youth, teachers, journalists, lawyers, etc., instead of being cowed down, are joining the anti-fascist struggle.

However, the anti-fascist struggle cannot break the backbone of the fascists unless it is ideologically armed; unless it understands the game plan of the fascists and avoids playing into their hands; unless it refuses to blindly follow the centrist Congress and Janata Dal, who despite the secular talk of their leaders, actually pave the way for the fascists. Let us first see why the centrist leaderships are unable and impotent to lead the anti-fascist struggle.

Communalism or fascism!

The centrist leaderships have always played down and underestimated not just the threat of fascism, but the nature

of fascism itself. How can one account for the electoral sharing of seats between the Janata Dal and the BJP in 1989? Does one have electoral alliances with fascists? How can one account for the Chandrashekhar government and the Congress government, getting the Hindu fascists and Muslim fundamentalists together to amicably solve the mandir-masjid dispute through negotiations and then further trusting the promise made by the Hindu fascists to the Supreme Court? Does one believe the word of fascists, give respectability to them and thus disarm the masses?

It is true that from time to time, Congress and Janata Dal leaders have called the BJP communal. But there is a huge difference between communalism and fascism. Fascism is not merely the spreading of Hindu-Muslim hatred. Fascism is primarily **a fanaticised mass movement** led by a cadre-based party. This fanaticised mass movement by the fascists is used to subvert whatever little democracy that exists and to put in its place a fascist-type State power in order to serve the most reactionary exploiter classes. Armed fanaticised gangs are used to throttle the press, harass and humiliate all secular officers of the State and to make way for only those officials committed to their ideology. Armed fanaticised mobs are used to forcibly repress all struggles of the masses. The barbaric manner in which the *kar sevaks* mauled the journalists at Ayodhya, including women journalists, is a glimpse of fascism. The shameless manner in which Justice Tej Shankar, appointed by the Supreme Court at Ayodhya as an observer hoodwinked the Supreme Court till the end is a glimpse of how state officials can be committed to the fascists and yet be within the law. The brutal manner in which Shankar Guha Niyogi was gunned down in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh; the revolting behaviour of BJP goons who stripped the 70-year-old Dr. B.D. Sharma, President of Bharat Jan Andolan, for protesting against the setting up of a polluting industry in a tribal area, shows how fascism will deal with the struggle of the masses and their leaders. If the fascists could do all this **without being in power in Delhi**, you can well imagine how they will castrate whatever democracy that exists today, once they come to power at the centre!

Faced with the barbaric actions of the RSS-BJP-VHP combine in Ayodhya and its aftermath, some of the centrist leaderships have begun for the first time calling the RSS-BJP-VHP as fascists. But this is at most name-calling. Either naively or deliberately, these leaderships still refuse to understand the real sources which nurture fascism. Hence, the so-called solutions which the centrist leaderships are putting forward to fight fascism end up strengthening fascism. It is therefore important for the anti-fascist movement to refuse to uncritically parrot the 'solutions' put forward by the centrist leaderships; to expose the dangerous illusions behind them and work out an independent line to fight the fascist forces.

Centrist 'solutions' to fight fascism!

Power at the centre has always been in the hands of the centrist parties (Congress/Janata Party/Janata Dal) since 1947. Therefore the centrist parties can only think of solutions **which rely on the organs of State power and not on the power of the masses.** The State machinery is primary in any solution, the masses are on the periphery. According to centrist politicians, the republican Constitution, the independent judiciary, the manipulative powers of the bureaucracy and finally the repressive powers of the police and armed forces can deal with fascism.

But in fact, these organs of the State have been used by centrist leaderships either to capitulate to the fascists and provide them respectability, or to pretend to take tough measures against them. If capitulation does not work, the centrist leaderships go through the pretense of tough measures and vice-versa. Glance for a moment over the measures taken by the centrist Congress Party and Janata Dal in the past six years to see how they swing on this pendulum.

In 1986, the district magistrate of Faizabad ordered the locks of the disputed site to be opened, which had been sealed for both Hindus and Muslims since 36 years. It is obvious that the district magistrate responded to Congress(I) pressures as the Congress Party wanted to outbeat the BJP-VHP which had started the *tala kholo* agitation in 1984. The

Uttar Pradesh state Congress government under the chief ministership of Veer Bahadur Singh, broke open the locks in a record 19 minutes. Capitulation!

In 1989, two months before the general elections, when the BJP- VHP started the *shilanyas* programme, the Rajiv government once again capitulated and allowed them to perform *shilanyas* on the disputed site in order to steal some of the BJP Hindu votes for the Congress. Another capitulation!

In December 1989, during the general elections, it was the turn of the Janata Dal to capitulate, when its hunger for power pushed it to share seats with the BJP. For months, the ruling Janata Dal fawned over the BJP-VHP, negotiating with both, the VHP and the Muslim fundamentalists, thus giving them respectability and recognition. When an income-tax officer dared to question the accounts of the huge sums collected by the VHP, he was punished and transferred by the then finance minister Mr. Madhu Dandavate. More capitulation!

Then came Advaniji's *rath yatra* in November 1990 and the first *kar seva* programme. While V.P. Singh was bending backwards to work out a solution, the Janata Dal chief ministers of U.P. and Bihar swung to the opposite side of the pendulum and began taking tough measures. Finally, V.P. Singh also had to fall in line with these so-called tough measures. Advani was arrested, thousands of *kar sevaks* were temporarily jailed and returned home as heroes, a few were killed by the security forces and became martyrs. The tough measures instead of breaking the back of the fascists, broke the Janata Dal.

The Congress-supported Samajwadi Janata Party (Chandrashekhar) government formed after stabbing the Janata Dal in the back, began its innings by capitulating to the BJP-VHP. Once again the Hindu fascists and Muslim fundamentalists were brought together to negotiate, but this time they pretended to exchange archeological evidence to determine if really a mandir was destroyed to build the Babri Masjid. Not only was the VHP and the AIBMAC recognised as representatives of the Hindus and Muslims respectively, but another important secular principle was

subverted: The principle that real or perceived historical wrongs cannot be redressed by intimidating and humiliating sections of the people today. The principle that Muslims of today cannot and should not be made to pay for the crimes committed or alleged to have been committed by Muslim emperors hundreds of years ago.

The Narasimha Rao government continued the same soft line of his predecessor. When the VHP, for the second time, began *kar seva* in Ayodhya in complete violation of court orders, the Rao government managed to temporarily stop the *kar seva* after promising to solve the problem within three months. Negotiations between the VHP and AIBMAC were again renewed. When the Congress began talking of referring the matter to the Supreme Court for final settlement, the VHP unilaterally broke off all talks and began preparing a gigantic *kar seva* programme for December 6, 1992. The Narasimha Rao government was totally paralysed. It could only rely on the word given by BJP-VHP leaders to the Supreme Court that no construction would take place. How these leaders kept their word, became clear from the belated report of the Supreme Court observer in Allahabad, "No construction has taken place. Only demolition!"

Tough measures?

Now that capitulation has ended in a fiasco, the centrist Narasimha Rao government has swung to the opposite side of the pendulum. Bravado, tough talk and administrative measures against the fascists! A few top leaders of the BJP and VHP have been arrested. The RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, the Jamaat-i-Islami Hind and the Islamic Sevak Sangh have been banned. There is talk of banning the BJP from participating in elections. But all these tough measures have been contemptuously dismissed by the fascists. If the first ban on the RSS in the aftermath of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, when nearly the whole country was against it, actually strengthened it, you can imagine what this ban will do to it, now that it has a substantial following and organisational base.

Thus, we see that the administrative repressive organs of State cannot contain fascism, leave alone defeat it. Neither

the so-called soft line of the centrist parties nor their hard line can make any dent on the fascist forces, because **both these lines depend primarily on the organs of the State to contain fascism.**

Three reasons

Why cannot the organs of State contain the onward march of fascism? There are three primary reasons. The first and most important is that the organs of State, *viz.* the bureaucracy, judiciary, police, armed forces are polarised. Substantial sections of the State machinery are committed to the ideology of the Hindu fascists. The statement of the Bombay police commissioner Mr. Bapat that when a policeman puts on his uniform, he knows no religion, is an exaggeration. Several newspapers have carried reports of how ex-officers of the police and armed forces had given military training to the *kar sevaks*. The BJP- VHP's membership is a who's who of the former top brass in the State machinery. It is the fascisised sections in the organs of State power who give protection to the fascist organisations even when so-called tough measures are taken by the centrist governments.

The second most important reason as to why the organs of State cannot contain the fascist onslaught, is because fascism is a mass movement, fanaticised by blind intolerance and prejudice, especially against Muslims. **Administrative or repressive measures alone cannot contain a mass movement.** It can only strengthen it. A mass movement can only be broken with an ideological onslaught, and the only ideas that the centrists can preach is moralising to the masses that Ram and Rahim are one. This moralising sounds fake because centrist leaderships have themselves nurtured communal outfits. The Shiv Sena was created by the Congress Party to break the leadership of the Communists over the trade unions. During every election, the centrist parties themselves hobnob with communal organisations for votes.

Since all centrist leaderships have especially capitulated to Muslim fundamentalists for votes, the fascist mass movement is fanaticised not only against the centrist parties but also against those organs of the State which are perceived

as pampering the Muslims. Note the hate campaign unleashed by the RSS-BJP- VHP combine against the courts which prohibited any construction work by the *kar sevaks*. Note, how this combine has poisoned the minds of the masses against the centrist parties and courts by declaring that "inspite of 43 years of agitation, we have been prohibited from building a Ram temple, while within 43 seconds, the Muslims have been promised that the Babri Masjid will be rebuilt."

The third most important reason, why the organs of State are impotent to check the fascists is because these organs of the State are totally alienated from the mass of working and toiling people. The putrefying corruption in every cell of the State machinery, the daily harassment and repression suffered by the toiling masses at the hands of the police, the mockery of justice perpetrated by the courts on the working class, etc., have left a permanent scar on the working people. That is why when the fascists ridicule the 'justice' of the courts, it strikes a chord in the hearts of the people. That is why when the fascists claim that the police is repressing those fighting for *Hindutva*, the Hindu masses are taken in. It is for this reason that the fascists who are actually murderers of even bourgeois democracy, **actually can pose as the real defenders of democracy**. The Hindu fascists claim to be democrats because they claim to represent the will and wishes of the Hindus who are a majority. They claim to be fighting for democracy in the face of repression from the State machinery. That is why all the so-called tough administrative measures of the centrist leaderships against the fascists have only helped them to wear the halo of democrats.

From centrism to fascism

Therefore, all centrist solutions are doomed to actually pave the way for fascism. If the centrists try soft solutions like talks, negotiations, pleading, reason, etc., the fascists are emboldened and their importance is blown out of all proportions before their communities. If the centrists try the Mulayam Singh and Arjun Singh hard line, the fascists appear as martyrs and fighters for democracy. Both soft and

hard solutions give grist to the fascist propaganda mill. That is why the centrist parties are trapped and will inexorably lose ground to the fascists.

Centrist formations like the Congress and Janata Dal are political organisations created to wield power in a period of parliamentary democracy. Organisationally, centrist parties are essentially vote-collecting machines, primarily suited for the wheeling and dealing involved in electoral battles. Note how the Congress candidates organise huge processions while fighting elections but cannot mobilise even a small fraction in anti-communal or anti-fascist demonstrations or morchas. During the last two decades, these vote-collecting machines have had to rely more and more on lumpen elements to do their dirty work on election day. Today, these lumpens are gravitating towards the fascists, helping them **to get majorities through the ballot**. However, the primary aim of the fascists is not merely to win electoral victories, but to use these victories to castrate parliamentary democracy itself.


The institutions of parliamentary democracy cannot stop them, because these institutions themselves have been corroded from within. Witness how the members of parliament themselves have turned their august institution into a battle-ground where paper missiles, chappals, mikes, etc., are thrown at each other, members are intimidated and man-handled while all proceedings grind to a halt. This is only a manifestation of how deep the rot has set in and it is the height of stupidity to believe that the organs of the State which have rotted, can rid the polity of the fascists.

Therefore, the centrist line to contain fascism is bankrupt. Centrist leaderships cannot lead any anti-fascist struggle unless they renounce this bankrupt line.

Therefore, the anti-fascist movement would have to develop a programme **independent** of the bankrupt line of the centrist leaderships. If the Left and Democratic forces walk in the shadow of the centrist leaderships, there will be no effective challenger to fascism. If the Left and Democratic forces reduce themselves to calling for stronger doses of administrative action against the fascists, they are only fooling themselves because the administration itself is

falling apart. It is because the administration is falling apart that the most reactionary and farsighted sections of the exploiter classes need the fascists in State power so that their organisational and repressive powers will enable them to rule longer.

The burning task of the day is to develop a political line, independent of the centrists, which places not the organs of the State, but the toiling masses at the centre of the anti-fascist struggle.



Towards building an anti-fascist movement

TOWARDS building an anti-fascist movement, published in December 1992, is an important article for all activists committed to building an anti-fascist Front. It puts forward a political line which sharply differentiates itself from the political outlook of the centrist parties. More important, it points out why it is necessary for anti-fascist fighters to **sharpen** rather than blunt their differences with the centrists on the most fundamental questions concerning the anti-fascist movement.

ON December 6, 1992, the domes of the disputed structure in Ayodhya not only fell to the ground, but also crashed over the head of the Congress Party. A lot of the debris has also fallen on the non-BJP opposition, who at the National Integration Council meeting had solidly stood behind the Narasimha Rao government and given the prime minister a free hand.

Now that history has exposed how paralysed this free hand was in the midst of the fascist onslaught, the various Congress factions are competing with each other in taking so-called tough measures against the RSS-BJP-VHP combine. In short, we are deceived into believing that the same paralysed hand can be turned into a fist.

The Congress leadership can continue with their deceptive antics. However, a great churning is taking place in not only the Left parties and organisations but also within the rank and file of the centrist parties. Honest, secular and democratic party workers are disillusioned with their party leaderships and are searching for an alternative line to fight fascism. Keeping this in mind, we are putting forward our views on how an independent anti-fascist movement can be developed **which does not walk in the shadow of the centrist leaderships**. We claim no monopoly of the truth and we invite criticisms and suggestions from all those committed to the historic task of fighting fascism.

The anti-fascist movement has to be developed through a twin process, both of which may appear contradictory. At a strategic and fundamental level it has to ideologically sharply demarcate its line from the centrist line, constantly exposing the bankruptcy of the centrists. And yet at the tactical level it has to be prepared to unite even temporarily with the centrist forces in any anti-communal, united actions and programmes.

Why is it of fundamental and strategic importance for the anti-fascist movement to demarcate itself from the centrist line? There are two important reasons.

The first is that the so-called soft line or hard line of the centrist parties actually paves the way for fascism. By blindly following the centrist leaderships, the anti-fascist

movement will instead of weakening and defeating fascism, objectively only strengthen it.

In fact the game plan of the fascists is to break the centrist parties and to paralyse their ranks, knowing very well that a section of the centrist leaderships will eventually capitulate to them and even join them. It is not the task of the anti-fascist movement to save the eventual disintegration of the centrist parties. It cannot, even if it wants to. It is the task of the anti-fascist movement to win the honest and secular rank and file of the centrist parties to the anti-fascist struggle.

The second and most important reason is that fascism is a powerful ideology which can fanaticise the masses who are especially cynical of the centrist parties and their politics. This powerful ideology cannot be exposed or defeated with the help of the opportunistic and bankrupt ideological positions of the centrist parties. **The anti-fascist movement cannot use the tattered ideological positions of the centrists to win the battle of ideas against the fascists.**

The anti-fascist movement requires a more powerful ideology to fight the fascists — an ideology rooted in the bitter experiences of the masses with our fraudulent secular-democracy, an ideology which upholds the finest traditions of struggle against all fundamentalisms and bigotry, an ideology which gives expression to the democratic strivings of the masses against all forms of class tyranny. This powerful ideology can only be forged in a merciless struggle against the ideology of the centrists. And to do this the anti-fascist movement must sharpen its differences with the centrists on the most fundamental questions concerning the anti-fascist movement. What are these fundamental questions?

The question of secularism

The first and foremost question is that of secularism. Why is this question important? It is important because it is on this question that the fascists have won over not only vast sections of Hindus, but also some Muslims. It is on this question that the fascists have demarcated themselves sharply from the centrist parties and carved their own in-

dependent identity. More and more secular people are being sickened by the brand of secularism peddled by our rulers, which has been skillfully exploited to the hilt by the RSS-BJP-VHP to push the people towards their aggressive *Hindutva* ideology. The relentless charge of pseudo-secularism by the *Hindutva* brigade against the centrists strikes a chord among the common people precisely because the people have lost faith in Nehruvian secularism and its upholders. Hence the anti-fascist movement cannot base itself on the brand of secularism peddled by the centrist parties. It has to expose this 'secularism', for only in doing this, can they expose the pseudo-*Hindutvawad* of the fascists.

The basic ideological foundation of Nehruvian secularism is "**equal State support to all religions**". Using this as a fig leaf, the Congress Party has provided State support to the fundamentalists of every community. Government land, grants, tax exemptions have been provided to fundamentalists of every religion to run schools, colleges, social welfare centres, charitable institutions, etc., where in the name of "seva", they perpetuate their stranglehold over their respective communities. How effective is the ban on the RSS and Jamaat-i-Islami-Hind when these two organisations control thousands of schools, colleges, hospitals, etc? Can communities be free from communal poison when they are made dependent on known communal outfits for education, health, welfare, etc? Even relief for riot victims or free legal aid for those arrested is provided by fundamentalist organisations.

Mind you, there are secular, progressive sections in every community. And yet centrist leaders have encouraged and supported the reactionary sections to control charitable and public trusts, in exchange for votes. In the struggle between progress and reaction going on in every community, Nehruvian secularism has used the authority of the State to be on the side of reaction. Is it surprising then that this reaction has become so powerful, that today it threatens to smash Nehruvian secularism itself?

Another dangerous offshoot of Nehruvian secularism has been the preoccupation of the centrist parties to indulge in

communal politics for electoral purposes or to counteract electoral foes. Since the centrist parties are essentially vote-gathering machines, they cannot but indulge in this cynical game. Thus the Shiv Sena was created by the Congress Party to counteract the Communists. In the Punjab, it was the Congress Party who created and nurtured Bhindranwale to outmanoeuvre the Akalis. It was the Congress who instigated goons to massacre innocent Sikhs in the riots after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi. Till now no one has been convicted or punished. The Congress Party was also responsible for giving a fillip to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in order to cut into the BJP vote-bank. Karan Singh, a staunch Congress leader and former minister was the founding president of the VHP. In U.P., top Congress leaders have been active in the VHP. It was the Congress government which opened the locks of the disputed site in Ayodhya, in its competition with the BJP for Hindu votes.

However, the most consistent plank of Nehruvian secularism **has been its continuing capitulation to Muslim fundamentalism under the guise of protecting the minorities.** The real motive of course has been not just the Muslim vote-bank, but because the fundamentalists could be counted upon to keep the Muslim masses backward to ensure their barbaric exploitation by the ruling classes. Thus, whether in the Shah Bano case or the demand for a uniform personal law based on justice and equality, the centrists have sidelined progressive Muslims and supported the reactionaries among the Imams and Mullahs. It is for this reason that the prime minister has rushed in to declare that the Babri Masjid will be constructed again, despite the fact that the Muslim masses have not made such a demand.

Today when the Congress Party has lost sizable support among the Muslims, it is Mr. V.P. Singh who is desperately trying to win for his party what the Congress has lost. Mr. Chandrashekar's SJP has gone to the extent of demanding not just the rebuilding of the Babri Masjid, but also the shifting of the Shri Ram idols from the disputed site. All this public drama to mollify "the hurt Muslim psyche" has been exploited to the hilt by the RSS-BJP-VHP to fanaticise the Hindu masses against Muslims in general.

This tailing behind Muslim fundamentalism by the defenders of Nehruvian secularism flows from the **pernicious theory that majority communalism is more dangerous than minority communalism**. Using this as a fig leaf, the Congress Party has gone through the legal motions of curbing in a half-hearted manner, Hindu reactionary practices (e.g. banning sati, polygamy among Hindus, the devdasi system, etc) while refusing to support any similar progressive movement for reform among the Muslims. It is for this reason that the Hindu fascists (who have always opposed the reform of Hindu reactionary practices) keep repeating that Hindus are oppressed and discriminated in Hindustan.

The anti-fascist movement would have to reject this Nehruvian ideological foundation that minority communalism is less dangerous than majority communalism. In fact Muslim fundamentalism is complementary to Hindu fascism. Muslim fundamentalism is required by the Hindu fascists to fanaticise the Hindus against Muslims. **Both fundamentalisms feed on each other**. You cannot have one without the other. The centrist leaderships project the Hindu fascists and Muslim fundamentalists as adversaries. They bend backward to bring these two 'adversaries' together at the negotiating table and thus give them State recognition as 'representatives' of Hindus and Muslims. After a communal riot these two 'adversaries' are again brought together in peace committees by the same centrist parties. This sordid tradition which poses as secular must be exposed. The Hindu fascists and the Muslim fundamentalists are **not adversaries**. In fact there are scores of examples to show how the Hindu fascists and the Muslim fundamentalists are united at the top. Unless this is constantly exposed to the masses, these leaderships who instigate their communities to kill each other cannot be defeated.

Politicising religious disputes

The second most fundamental question for the anti-fascist movement is the question of politicising religious disputes. The game plan of the fascists is to deliberately politicise religious disputes in order to fanaticise and polarise the

masses along communal lines as a means to establish their fascist power. The centrist leaderships instead of exposing and opposing this game plan have instead become partisans of religious disputes, putting forward 'solutions' which precisely help the fascists to further polarise the masses. The important question is, should secular forces become partisans of religious disputes and suggest the building of temples and masjids? Should they be in the forefront of suggesting solutions with different combinations and permutations to solve religious disputes? Can such 'solutions' lead to any lasting peace when especially the Hindu fascists and the Muslim fundamentalists are primarily interested in exploiting religious disputes for political gain and to increase their stranglehold over their respective communities? Do these 'solutions' not actually further play into the hands of the fascists? Can we forget how it was the fascists who were the happiest when Narasimha Rao announced that the Babri Masjid would be rebuilt, as this could keep the dispute burning?

The centrist parties are desperately putting forward 'solutions' to prove that they stand for the equal protection of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' interests. This flows from the Nehruvian understanding of secularism which is equal State support to all religions. In the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid question the BJP-VHP have put the centrist parties into a pincer. In this case, it is not possible for the centrist leaderships to placate both the Hindu fascists and Muslim fundamentalists. Their slogan *mandir yahin banayenge* (The mandir will only be built here) is to ensure that the centrists will either capitulate to them, or if they resist, to dub them as Muslim appeasers. To suggest 'solutions' to those who want no solutions is to deceive the masses that the religious dispute is primary, when what is really at stake is the struggle to establish fascist State power. Since for the fascists, religious disputes are only a means for their fascist ends, they will rake up not only other religious disputes (*Ab Kashi, Mathura, baki hai*) but will also continue to ignite further disputes with the 'solutions' put forward by the centrists. All this can only help to fanaticise and polarise the masses

along communal lines which is primarily the game plan of the Hindu fascists and Muslim fundamentalists.

The task of the anti-fascist movement is not to be a partisan in religious disputes, but to consistently expose the forces who politicise these disputes. Vis-a-vis any religious dispute their task is not to suggest 'solutions', but to oppose the breaking or the tampering of religious shrines which can inflame communal passions. That is why, just as secular forces have opposed the breaking of the Babri Masjid, we should also oppose the shifting of the Shri Ram idols, as all these actions can only create the breeding ground for fascism to spread.

Democracy versus fascism!

The third most fundamental question for the anti-fascist movement is the question of democracy. In their rivalry against the RSS-BJP-VHP combine, the centrist parties continuously parrot their commitment to democracy. And yet the masses have begun to lose all faith in the fraudulent democracy peddled and practised by the centrist leaderships. Elections have become a shameful display and competition of money power and muscle power. Promises are given only to be cynically broken. There is no way in which the 'sovereign people' can recall even the most dishonest MP, MLA or corporator. Notorious criminals have been given tickets by parties claiming to be democratic. Parliament has been turned into a free-for-all slanging match by MPs who then fraternise and dine outside. Most of the so-called peoples' representatives are busy acting as middlemen for capitalist lobbies, property speculators, builders, traders and foreign interests. Corruption is the second name for bourgeois democracy.

While this mockery of democracy takes place, the toiling masses are daily ground down by an undeclared dictatorship. They are harassed by the police and anti-social elements. Their humble homes are broken down. Their jobs and livelihoods are snatched away while the police and courts side the capitalists. Their struggles for a life of dignity and honour are met by lathis and bullets. This daily onslaught on the identity, the dignity and self-respect of the

masses has become intolerable. As a result, the people have become so cynical that they can only have contempt for the centrist leaderships who claim to defend democracy against fascism. Can the anti-fascist movement expose and oppose fascism by clutching at the tattered rags of bourgeois democracy?

In fact the fascists are winning over new recruits by contemptuously making fun of the democracy upheld by the centrists, **while sections of the Left have become the most powerful defenders of this bourgeois democracy.** It is the fascists who are parading as democrats, because they claim to represent the Hindus who are the majority. They claim that the voice of democracy is being throttled by bans and arrests. They claim that the Hindu rights of the majority are being suppressed while a minority (Muslims) are being pampered.

Let us not underestimate the power of this inverse and perverse conception of democracy to attract the masses who have become cynical of bourgeois democracy. When the fascists talk of restoring the pride and self-respect of Hindus, it strikes a chord because bourgeois democracy has stamped on the self-respect of the people. And now with the so-called tough measures adopted by the Narasimha Rao government, the fascists have seized the golden opportunity of parading as super-democrats. That is why the BJP leaders have been the first to demand elections, while so-called democrats are chided for dismissing state governments. The fact that the masses are cynical of bourgeois democracy **is a sign that the masses are thirsting for a genuine peoples' democracy. It is a sign that the masses are yearning for fundamental change.** It is the task of the anti-fascist movement to give expression and direction to this yearning.

Therefore, the anti-fascist movement has to demarcate itself sharply from the bourgeois democracy of the centrist parties. It would have to mercilessly expose the bankruptcy and fraudulent nature of this democracy. It would have to distance itself from, and expose the so-called tough measures of the Congress Party which objectively only strengthen the political campaign of the fascists. Only then can it have a principled basis for mocking at the democratic pretensions

of the RSS-BJP-VHP. Only then can it expose which Hindus they really represent: the mass of working and toiling Hindus, or the Dalmias, the Ambanis, the Singhanias, the property speculators and the big traders?

IMF today — fascism tomorrow!

The fourth most important question for the anti-fascist movement is the neo-imperialist penetration of our country and its virtual sell-out to imperialist finance capital. Since the past one year, the Congress Party has bent backwards to dance to the tune of the IMF. The country has been mortgaged and thousands of crores of rupees are being extracted from the people to service the foreign debt. The new economic policies of the government has viciously attacked the livelihoods of the workers, the landless, the peasants, the dalits and the tribals. Besides this, thousands of businesses are being ground down due to the so-called liberalisation and globalisation policies of the Congress(I).

Although the RSS-BJP-VHP combine has supported these policies in Parliament and in meetings organised abroad, yet with another tongue it is pretending to oppose the sell-out of the country by the Congress(I).

Under the guise of *swadeshi*, this combine has been desperately propping up its nationalist credentials. While on the one hand it has squeaked against the amendment of patent laws, the cutting of fertilizer subsidies, etc., yet its leaders have gone out of their way to reassure imperialist interests that they wholeheartedly support the economic policies of the Narasimha Rao government. Their game plan is clear: to win over sections of the capitalists and the peasantry adversely affected by the NEP, while at the same time pledging to the IMF that when in power it will not change the direction of the NEP. Therefore, its token opposition to this neo-colonialism is a fraud. As a party it dare not lift a finger against foreign finance capital. **It dare not cancel the huge foreign debt and break the chains which enslave our country.** In fact, imperialist finance capital requires a repressive fascist government which the BJP can provide, to ensure that its interest payments continue unabated and all who oppose this are crushed. Besides, the so-called Hindu

Rashtra the BJP seeks to establish, can only mean continuous civil disturbances and even wars with our neighbours, which can only help the most reactionary sections of imperialism, *viz.* those that control the armaments industry.

However, the anti-fascist movement can only expose the deceitful nationalism of the RSS-BJP-VHP combine if it sharply demarcates itself not only from the economic policies of the Congress(I) and other centrists, but also demands the strongest measures against imperialist finance capital, including the cancellation of the foreign debt. Only then can it expose the fraudulent nationalism of the RSS-BJP-VHP. Only then can it aggressively expose which Hindus are fattened from maintaining links with foreign finance capital and which Hindus are chained.

The strongest measures against imperialist finance capital can only be successfully undertaken if it has the support of especially the working and toiling people of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka whose governments also have mortgaged their people to imperialism — governments who line the pockets of the international war contractors by spending crores of rupees everyday on 'defence', while starving their own people. To the rabid nationalism and war hysteria of the BJP, the anti-fascist movement must counterpose the international brotherhood of the toiling people of the subcontinent against all totalitarian and fascist governments, against the chains of international finance capital which have once again intertwined our fates and destinies.

The primary forces — the masses!

The fifth fundamental question on which the anti-fascist movement has to demarcate itself from the centrists is which will be the primary forces to fight fascism: The organs of the State, or the awakened and organised toiling masses. The centrist parties rely only on the organs of the State to contain fascism. But the fact is that a large section of the State machinery has been won over to the ideology of the fascists. The fact is that if the fascists win power at the centre it will be a question of time before secular elements within the State machinery are purged, while only those who

acquiesce to their ideology will man the police, the CRPF, the military, the courts and the bureaucracy. In addition, the fascists have at their disposal lakhs of cadres who have been ideologically fanaticised not only against Muslims, but the centrists and Left parties as well. Tens of thousands of these cadres have been drilled and given arms training. The organs of the State are impotent to combat these cadres because they are committed and also enjoy the patronage of powerful sections of the ruling classes.


Despite this, the centrist parties still delude the people that fascism can be defeated by the organs of the State. The reason is also because the centrist parties are unable to create an army of committed cadres because centrist ideology has been discredited in practice and hence cannot inspire commitment and discipline. It is therefore not surprising that many members belonging to the trade unions, student organisations, kisan fronts of the centrist parties **themselves are sympathetic to the aggressive *Hindutva* ideology of the RSS-BJP-VHP.** Very few believe in the **sanctimonious moralising on communal harmony preached by centrist leaders who themselves cannot rule without exploiting caste and religion.** That is why although the centrists control the largest mass organisations in the country, they cannot even bring a tiny fraction of their members in anti-fascist demonstrations. On the other hand, the fascists with the help of their armed cadres and lumpen elements can force bandhs, disrupt public meetings organised by secular forces, terrorise their opponents, instigate communal riots and literally halt civil life. The centrist leaderships refuse to similarly arm the secular forces and instead only preach peace and harmony. The anti-fascist movement must expose this fraudulent pacifism in the face of the armed fascist onslaught. In some parts of the country, the fascists were unable to instigate riots because the Left and Democratic forces had formed armed defence committees of the people to protect communal harmony. Without the arming of secular forces, the armed might of the fascists cannot be paralysed.

The need for an anti-fascist united front

The breaking of the Babri Masjid and the horrendous riots it unleashed, gave the whole country a glimpse of fascism. Thousands of peace committees and relief committees have been formed in response to the barbaric events. In addition, united fronts of different types have been formed consisting of not only Left and Democratic forces but also of centrist parties. A serious process of questioning and critical rethinking has begun in a number of organisations. The old parched ground on which dogmas and sectarianism grew has been ploughed up, creating immense possibilities for the growth of the anti-fascist movement. The anti-fascist forces have to be prepared to work in any united front action against communalism and fascism, even if these fronts consist of centrist parties. However, in such joint work the fascists have to be opposed not from the ideological positions of the centrists. The 'solutions' put forward by the centrist leaderships to contain communalism and fascism must not be accepted uncritically.

Can such work be possible? Yes, it is possible **if we are willing to be tactically flexible without compromising our strategic outlook.** In the days to come there will be a number of centrist leaderships whose very survival will force them to renounce their centrist positions and who can be of invaluable help to the anti-fascist movement. However, we cannot forget that united fronts with such centrist or liberal forces are by their very nature temporary fronts, activated sporadically and full of contradictions and tensions.

In all this work, we should have a strategic, long-term goal: The building of a long-term, strategic United Front of Organisations **who outrightly reject the ideological positions of the centrist parties** and who will through joint work among the toiling masses, forge the ideological positions of the anti-fascist, people's democratic movement. This is the burning task of the day.



Muslims against fascism!

T HIS article by Masooma Ranaalvi was published in December 1992, when Muslims throughout the country were shattered not only by the breaking of the Babri Masjid but also by the communal frenzy and police firings which followed. It argues why it is necessary for Muslims to reject the Nehruvian understanding of secularism if they are to successfully meet the threat of the Hindutvawadi combine. It calls upon Muslims to question all those who in the name of "minority rights" have perpetuated backwardness in the community.

“THE moment you hear of an attack on the Babri Masjid, raze every temple of your locality, village or town to the ground,” was the venom spewed by Maulana Kachauchi, a former Congress(I) member of Parliament and president of the Uttar Pradesh unit of the Babri Masjid Action Committee at a meeting at Jama Masjid on August 3, 1992. At that moment an outraged Wasim Ahmed, national secretary of the Janata Dal, jumped on to the stage and in public lambasted him. “It is people like you who have ruined the community, you ignite the fires and then vanish, leaving the illiterate masses to suffer the brunt, your rhetoric and actions help the RSS-BJP combine and weaken the secular forces.” (*India Today*, October 31, 1992)

These are two sharply opposing perspectives voiced by two Muslims. One is that of a rabid reactionary maulana who instigates the community to hate Hindus and demolish their temples. A view which is complementary to that which Hindu fascists preach and one which can only lead the country towards a civil war. The other view exposes and opposes the rottenness of the Muslim fundamentalists and their rabid rhetoric which has helped and can only further help the Hindu fascists and weaken the democratic and secular forces.

Both these views which clashed at the meeting at Jama Masjid showed that the Muslim community is not a monolith. On the contrary, it clearly revealed the intense conflict, contradictions, turmoil and churning going on within the Muslim community. In the days to come this conflict will only intensify.

Each and every Muslim will have to clearly take a stand. Will we go behind the reactionary Muslim fundamentalists who today are vociferously mouthing slogans of secularism, but are the worst enemies of secularism. Or will we join and strengthen the movement for democracy and against fascism, the battle for which has to start first **from within our own community**.

Nehruvian secularism!

Maulana Kachauchi does not belong to either the Jamaat-i-Islami or the Islamic Seva Sangh, but the Congress(I). He

is a classic product of the Congress's half-hearted secularism that is being perpetrated on us since the last 40 years. Die hard ideologues of Nehruvian secularism may term the presence of Maulana Kachauchvi as an aberration. But that is a falsehood. Nurturing of fundamentalists like Kachauchvi is the most logical outcome of Nehruvian secularism. It cannot be otherwise. And this we must understand.

The "Protection of minorities" is one of the many ideals which Nehruvian secularism set itself out to promote. A laudable ideal indeed. For 40 long years, the Congress had the mandate to put into effect this ideal of "protection of minorities". And protect the minorities they certainly did. But just one per cent of the minorities — the reactionary among the Mullahs, the Imams and the Syednas. The most rabid, reactionary sections of the minority who kept the Muslim masses socially backward and tied to their *fatwas*, who forcibly extracted religious taxes from them and used the deadly weapon of ex-communication and social boycott to keep them in line, who imposed the most putrid social laws on women and shackled them, who pushed the masses towards ghettos, kept them illiterate and ignorant — all such elements were pampered and protected by the 'secular' Congress State.

This policy of protecting the fundamentalist Muslims was no accident. It was a conscious policy, the need for which can be understood from the fact that the foundation stone of 'modern' India built by the Nehru dynasty was savage exploitation. A modern India which benefited only the exploiters. To ensure that the exploiter classes reaped the fruits of progress and development, to ensure that they looted the blood and sweat of the working masses, it was essential to keep the masses as backward and unorganised as possible.

It is for this reason that Congress governments patronised reactionary, self-proclaimed custodians of religion, who on behalf of the ruling classes were given the job of keeping the masses of their community entrenched in superstition and all kinds of backward customs and practices. The task to divert the anger of the people not against the exploiters, but against the common people of other religions and thus

sabotage the struggles of the working people against injustice. For this reason Nehruvian secularist governments partronised not just the self-appointed custodians of Islam, but also similar custodians of Hinduism, and other religions.

Preserving whose culture?

One offshoot of the ideal of "protection of minorities" was that of "preserving the cultural identity" of minorities. On this front let us see how our Nehruvian secularists performed.

In the guise of allowing minorities to preserve their culture, fascist outfits like the Jamaat-i-Islami and dictatorial high priests like the Syedna were allowed to open and run educational institutions, and thus get a stranglehold over the minds of the masses. Full freedom was granted to them to teach what they like in their madrassas, schools and colleges. Government recognition was granted, cent percent aid, free and subsidized lands, all was made available to them. Thus when the Jamaat refuses to teach science and technology in most of the madrassas controlled by them, and when the Syedna victimises the principal of his school for allowing students to stage a skit depicting Hindu life, what kind of cultural identity of the minorities has been protected — the reactionary or the progressive?

In the era of Nehruvian secularism, promotion of cultural identity has become the sole preserve of these *thekedars* who have extracted unaccounted monies from the public and set up "charitable trusts". These trusts, which enjoy tax concessions and other benefits, run a battery of charity institutions like hospitals, hostels, orphanages, dharamshalas, community halls, educational institutions, etc.— all of which only strengthened the hands of the fundamentalists who strut around as godfathers of their communities.

In the name of preserving the identity of minorities, Nehruvian secularism gave a free rein to Muslim fundamentalists to make and implement the most obnoxious social laws called Muslim Personal Laws. Thus reactionary practices like the unilateral right to divorce for men, polygamy for men, child marriage, etc, which have been considerably reformed and even done away with in

several Islamic states, continue to be imposed on the Indian Muslims.

In another instance, to preserve the identity of the Bohra Muslim community, the Syedna has been given full liberty to throttle the entire community, impose an absolutely rigid code of conduct, dress code, etc. He has been allowed to extract Rs. 30 crores annually from the community in the name of religious taxes. He has been allowed to smash with impunity the fundamental constitutional rights to life, liberty, dignity and freedom of expression and to impose the barbaric practice of social boycott on all dissenters without any fear of the laws of the land. While mouthing their commitment to secularism, fundamentalists like the Syedna run their empires like a mini-theocratic State within the so-called secular Indian State. All this has precisely made a mockery of the term secularism.

Secularism: A weapon for change!

True secularism should have meant supporting and promoting progressive elements of all communities to the forefront. Encouraging progressive elements to run educational and cultural institutions in their respective communities would have paved the way for instilling a scientific temper and progressive outlook that would question all that is backward, harmful and retrograde. It would have helped in starting the process of drawing people out of their ghettos and helped them merge with the broader society. It would have helped draw women out of their age-old chains and equipped them to stand on their own feet. It would have strengthened the fight against chauvinistic values and infused a spirit of amity and communal harmony.

Nehruvian secularism did precisely the opposite. It **sidelined progressive elements and patronised fundamentalist elements** in order to capture the vote banks of the masses kept backward by the reactionaries. What happened to Prof. Mushirul Hasan, pro-vice chancellor of Jamia Millia University? He was not only hounded by the fundamentalists, but even the 'secular' government committee humiliated him and made him apologise. What happened to the pleas of thousands of Bohra reformists who have been

fighting the tyranny of the Syedna? Instead of supporting them in their fight for reforms and change, Nehruvian secular Congress governments have turned a deaf ear to their cries.

Our die hard Nehruvian secularist ideologue may tell us that their governments have been forced to bow down before Muslim fundamentalists as in the Shah Bano case, because the masses are with them. True, very true. The majority of the masses are today with the fundamentalists, precisely because you, dear secularist, have allowed the one per cent of fundamentalist minorities to control the lives of the masses. From the womb to the grave, from head to toe, every aspect of the lives of the masses is in the control and in the vice-like grip of the fundamentalists. As we have seen above, a thousand and one invisible threads tie the life-line of the masses to the fundamentalists. Therefore, they could mobilise and draw millions out into the streets.

Hounding the minorities

Thus after 40 years of experiencing the Nehruvian policy of "protection of minorities", we can say that it has in practice meant hounding the minorities from all sides. Our fundamentalists have hounded us by imposing the most putrid laws, especially on our women, breeding intolerance and pushing us into ghettos. They have helped in keeping our youth illiterate, ignorant, backward and the victims of lumen godfathers, while the children of the fundamentalists have received the best and the most modern education in India or abroad.

We have been hounded by the Hindu fascists who have perpetrated anti-Muslim hatred using precisely the rabid rhetoric of the Muslim fundamentalists. In the thousands of communal holocausts that have taken place because of the hysteria unleashed by the Hindu fascists and Muslim fundamentalists, the death toll of Muslims is alarmingly high.

And last but not least, we have been hounded by the 'secular' State machinery which has increasingly become more and more communalised (like the PAC which has butchered thousands of Muslims.)

Yet, despite this history of oppression and repression, the Hindu fascists claim that Muslims have been **pampered**. When an old helpless Shah Bano is denied maintenance, the Muslims are supposed to be pampered. When Muslim women are made to suffer from reactionary personal laws in contrast to their Hindu sisters, it is again Muslims who are supposed to be pampered. When the overwhelming mass of Muslim children and youth are denied education and jobs, it is again Muslims who are supposed to be pampered. You can then well imagine what the RSS-BJP-VHP have in store for us when they come to power. Mind you, this combine does not claim that the Muslim fundamentalists are pampered. They say all Muslims are pampered.

The Muslims can fight the Hindu fascists **by primarily isolating the Muslim fundamentalists who complement the Hindu fascists**. The Hindu fascists need the Muslim fundamentalists so that they can target the whole Muslim community. That is why the BJP has demanded that the ban be lifted not only from the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal, but also from the Jamaat-i-Islami and Islamic Seva Sangh. Notice how the BJP requires the services of the Jamaat and the ISS so that they can continue their nefarious work together.

The task before the Muslims is to isolate the Muslim fundamentalists and to join hands with the millions of Hindus who are in the forefront of opposing the RSS-BJP-VHP. ■

The Journalist as Activist

I*N the article below, published in December 1992, Swati Bhatkal analyses how the concepts of “objectivity” and “non-partisanship” peddled by the centrist press have been rendered hollow and deceptive by the struggle between two ruling class ideologies — Nehruvianism and Hindutvawad. It explains how and why the centrist press has become the biggest apologists of the Hindutvawadi forces. It calls upon journalists to challenge such concepts and to redefine them in the context of the anti-fascist battles ahead of us.*

IN its election manifesto for the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, a manifesto which the centrist press eulogised and popularised, the party promising to lead our country towards Ram Rajya had said: "The BJP re-affirms its commitment to the freedom of thought and expression. We will: (1) make freedom of the press an explicit fundamental right and not just an implied one, derived from the citizen's right to Freedom of Speech; (2) encourage the healthy growth of the Press(3) review the Official Secrets Act so as to remove obstruction in Right to Know and enact a Freedom of Information law."

On December 6 at Ayodhya, the BJP and its associates in building Ram Rajya, displayed precisely and unequivocally, what they mean by "commitment to the freedom of thought and expression". Dozens of journalists were attacked with knives, bricks and crowbars and beaten to pulp; robbed of money, clothing and equipment; thrown into pits of excreta. A woman journalist was molested and beaten to within an inch of her life. An American correspondent was bashed into unconsciousness and the *kar sevaks* completed the holy rites, by dancing upon his comatose body. The torture did not stop there. Even after the journalists managed to reach their hotel at Faizabad, alive, they had to flee because the *kar sevaks* were coming to burn down the hotel. Through this entire brutal attack on the press, 'responsible' and 'respectable' BJP leaders like L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi looked on, unmoved. Journalists who pleaded with them for help were given short shrift, treated with contempt and generally ignored. Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia in fact, told the journalists that they had this coming for a long time.

The journalists who lived through the horror of Ayodhya, actually came face to face with naked fascism. The fascist message of the RSS-VHP-BJP was very clear — if you are not willing to spew the rabid fundamentalist poison that we spew, if you are not willing to become our slaves and toadies, if you dare to even mildly criticise us, we will crush you, and the might of the State will not intervene.

Friends, what happened to us at Ayodhya is the first glimpse, the *peheli jhaanki*. In the days to come, more rabid

and more fascist leaders will emerge to outflank from the right, the L.K. Advanis, M.M. Joshis, Rajmatas, Ashok Singhals and Vinay Katiyars; newspapers we today brand as communal will begin to appear liberal in comparison with more and more stridently fascist papers; the fascist atrocities committed on the people will become reminiscent of Hitler's Germany.

As society is polarised more and more on communal lines, as greater and greater masses of people are fanaticised, as the fascists widen and tighten their control over the minds of the people, journalists too will be forced to get polarised, to decide and make a choice. The fascists will leave journalists with only two options — to become the drumbeaters of their ideology or to oppose, expose and fight their fascist designs. The united protests by journalists in Delhi and several other parts of the country, against the attack on journalists in Ayodhya leaves one in no doubt that the honest and secular amongst us, will choose the latter option. Whether we survive the fight and wrench a victory for the ideals we uphold, or whether we become pawns in the devious games of the fascists and are destroyed, will depend on one crucial factor — how we equip ourselves for this battle today.

Journalist as activist?

The first important step for secular and democratic journalists is to discard traditional ideas that will shackle us in our battle. The very first of these ideas is that a journalist should not consider himself an activist. Closely connected with this idea is another one, that journalists should not take sides in an issue.

The very decision to fight the ideas of the fascists will dictate that we journalists take on the role of activists propagating the cause we believe to be true and just. And more importantly, activists who will consciously oppose and expose the ideology which will lead our country towards fascist rule. **The very decision to fight fascism will mean that we immediately take sides.** No journalist who is unwilling to compromise with the fascist forces can today afford to be diffident about being an activist — the fascists have

created the situation where we cannot afford such luxurious illusions. In fact, we will not only have to become activists but also be proud of the fact. After all, are not the journalist-activists of the right-wing who propagate fascist ideology day in and day out, who build up fascist leaders by feeding well-disguised lies to the people and create mass hysteria and fanaticism through their writings, proud of the role they are playing? What is their motto? *Garv se kaho hum sidewale hain* (Proclaim proudly that we are taking sides). And yet, we who are fighting for democracy and secularism are afraid to announce that we are taking sides — the side of truth! Why should we be ashamed of and apologetic about being activists fighting for a just cause?

Redefining objectivity and newsworthiness

Journalists supporting the fascists have long discarded the concept of objectivity which is made much of in the centrist press. Take for instance this edit page article that appeared in the *Indian Express* on November 25, 1992. "The BJP is not a conventional party, nor should it be. For an organisation whose ideological impetus is to rebuild India, the BJP cannot afford to be a normal political party.... The task before the BJP is best captured by an incomparable word from the American language, 'awesome'. There is no other way to describe the responsibility embraced by the BJP, at the source of which lies the condition of the Indian Republic and its people." And further, ".....it is revitalising the Indian nation which the BJP has earmarked as its goal and objective....The renaming, rewriting and rekindling of India's cultural heritage is therefore almost a natural phenomenon."

Another example, also from the *Indian Express*, November 15 1992, an euphoric report of the BJP's national executive meet, virtually cooed in delight: "It was well and truly the charge of the saffron brigade. For three days, it seemed that the temple town of Bhubaneswar had been hijacked by the Bharatiya Janata Party for its national executive meeting beginning from November 6. The city was ablaze with saffron and lotus flags dotting the sky, with loudspeakers blaring out paeans in the greatness of Lord Rama all over the city."

"In fact, those three days, the town sported a festive look with huge flower-bedecked gates welcoming the BJP luminaries..... Giant posters of the BJP leaders smiling down on the masses had suddenly sprouted all over the city, canvassing support for the Hindu cause. Swati Hotel, which housed most of the BJP elite, had literally become a new tourist spot, with hundreds thronging the venue to have a glimpse of their favourite leaders."

Yet, we continue to bear the burden of so-called objectivity on our shoulders, really believing that the centrist papers for which we work are truly objective. Friends, it is crucial today that we reassess this 'objectivity' and put it to the acid test. For unless we reassess this concept, **we will be unable to redefine it in the context of the battle ahead of us.** Unless we redefine this concept, it will shackle and trip us at every step in the battle ahead of us.

It is obvious that the objectivity of a paper like the *Indian Express* and others of that ilk, lies not in the high-sounding principles and theories enunciated by its editors, executive editors, associate editors and what not. Their 'objectivity' lies in the way they use every word and visual, for it is every word and visual that shapes popular consciousness. It is the use of words that can elevate the rabble-rousers of the VHP to the position where people believe that they lead all Hindus, and it is the use of words that can truly expose them for what they are. And it is obvious that the 'objectivity' of the centrist press has only aided and strengthened the fascists.

Let's look at some more examples. The city page of the *Times of India*, December 1 (remember, the countdown for the holocaust to follow had already begun). A prominent two-column report headed "2 lakh *kar sevaks* leave for Ayodhya from state" with a copy that confidently and unequivocally states: "Over 2,00,000 *kar sevaks* will leave Maharashtra to participate in *kar seva* in Ayodhya." Did the journalist count heads at VT station? No, of course not, he/she is merely 'accurate and objective.' Further, "While over 60,000 of them had already left, the remaining were expected to leave over the next two days.... This information was given here today by Mr. Raghunath Kulkarni, state BJP secretary." Let's ana-

lyse this 'objective' report further. Mr. Kulkarni, apparently by virtue of being a BJP functionary, does not claim or allege, he simply gives information, which is then conveyed to the reader as fact. And the "claimed", "alleged", etc., is reserved for those 'unimportant' activists and cadres who are fighting fascism and all kinds of repression day in and day out.

And to add to this brand of objectivity, there is of course "newsworthiness", that greatly hallowed principle of centrist newspapers. Newsworthiness of course means that Shri L.K. Advani's being bitten by mosquitoes hits the front page, while women activists protesting against communalism on December 8 and being viciously set upon by Hindu fascist goons in Bombay merits a practically invisible paragraph tucked away somewhere. What is more, such is the 'news sense' of our papers, that even the brutal attack on its own journalists in Ayodhya did not make the front page, or even the first five pages in most newspapers. Several newspapers did not even consider the attack on the journalists newsworthy enough to carry at all. Obviously, it is high time we decide — can we continue to subscribe to this brand of 'objectivity' and 'newsworthiness' as defined by the centrist papers and their managements?

Horns of a dilemma

Today, the 'objectivity' and 'newsworthiness' which the centrist press is in search of is trapped between the horns of a dilemma. What is this dilemma? Two ideologies of the ruling classes are involved in a heated struggle. On the one hand is Nehruvianism which as an ideology, served the dominant ruling classes and its party, the Congress Party, for 45 years. On the other hand, is the aggressive appeal of *Hindutva*. The first is a dying force, the second a rising force. Nehruvianism as an ideology, with its espousal of secularism, freedom of the press, protection of minorities, science and technology was at one time the beloved of the centrist press. It enabled the centrist press to parade as the voice of reason and progress and democracy. However, after more than four decades of Congress rule, Nehruvianism as an ideology lies shattered. Sizable sections of the ruling clas-

ses have lost faith in it. The united and integrated country it promised is riddled by the bullets of secessionists and the alienation of the people of Kashmir and Punjab. The Nehruvian secularism, it spouted has got totally discredited because of the direct support various fundamentalists have received from the Congress Party. The modern India, it set out to build, has made the Dalits and backward castes more strident in challenging the privileges and hegemony of the Brahmanical elite. The socialism it spawned for the benefit of the ruling exploiter classes is being mocked at by them itself. The democracy it enforced through money-power and muscle-power, has left the masses disgusted, while the ruling classes are finding even this democracy a burden.

In contrast, the RSS-VHP-BJP combine with their cadre-based discipline, their stress on character formation and discipline based on semi-feudal values, appears more appealing than the Congress Party where corruption, opportunism and factionalism have become its other names. In contrast, *Hindutva* promises to solve all the problems faced by the nation in a jiffy. "Stop pampering the Muslims and all our social and national problems will be solved." The fact that even intelligent and reasonable people can believe in this nonsense shows **how the ruling classes can no more rule by appealing to reason.**

This is the dilemma of the centrist press. **As a press, its vocation demands belief in reason and yet it has to be the voice of a ruling class that believes less and less in reason.** As a press, it has to believe in progress and yet its political heroes can only rule by obscurantism. As a press, it has to believe in freedom and yet it has to dismiss fascist attacks as mere aberrations. It constantly vacillates between Nehruvianism and *Hindutvawad*. It spouts secularism and yet it cannot help making the *Hindutva* brigade larger than life, literally making it into a cult. It desperately whitewashes their fascist designs presenting them as "reasonable" and **"constitutional" people.**

This is the crux. The centrist press does not mind junking Nehruvianism for *Hindutvawad* as long as it does not lead to a constitutional breakdown. For such a breakdown will not only frighten off foreign capital, but will also destabilise

the system of monopoly capital in India. Hence it will do anything to appease the fascist monster as long as there is no breakdown of the constitutional order.

The extent to which the centrist press will appease the fascist monster in order to protect its constitutional illusions can be seen from the extract given below of an editorial of *The Times of India* (November 25, 1992).

“Finally, Mr. L.K. Advani has gone on record to state that provided the *kar seva* is allowed, the disputed structure will be safe, and its future could be settled through further negotiations or by any other means. In plain words, Mr. Rao and the combine have to find some way to make it possible for the *kar seva* to take place legally, i.e., only outside the areas under litigation. As a *quid pro quo* the combine would have to agree to refer the fate of the disputed structure to the Supreme Court and to accept its verdict and not insist on the superiority of faith over law. Until these avenues are thoroughly explored, any talk of a confrontation, including the dismissal of the Kalyan Singh government, will prove to be calamitous.”

On 6 December, the constitutional illusion that a peaceful transfer from Nehruvianism to *Hindutvawad* could take place blew up into the face of the centrist press. On 7 December, *The Times of India* wailed in its front page editorial, “The Republic Besmirched.” Even the *Indian Express*, which vacillates closer to the *Hindutvawadis*, cried out, “A Nation Betrayed.”

But all this is momentary. After the shock has worn off, the centrist papers are back again into the same old game of paving the way for the fascists, vociferously defending their democratic rights, turning them into martyrs, etc. In short, the centrist press refuses to be the consistent voice of the anti-fascist movement.

Can we then as journalists, accept the ‘objectivity’ of the centrist press, which essentially vacillates between discredited Nehruvianism and fascist *Hindutvawad*? Our task must therefore be to redefine our principles, our understanding of objective journalism **to not only oppose the**

fascist ideology of *Hindutvawad*, but also expose the discredited Nehruvianism of the Congress Party.

Will managements protect us in the battle?

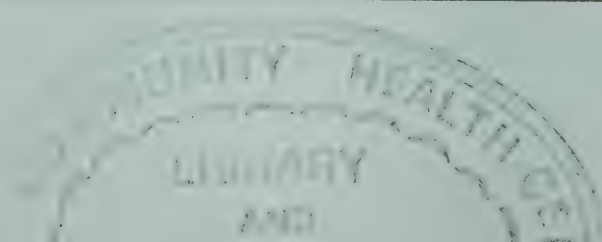
If any of the centrist press managements do support journalists who oppose fascism, they will be the exception and not the rule.

In fact, the writing on the wall is very clear — as the fascists grow from strength to strength, the centrist press managements will bow and scrape further and further to them. Where then do journalists fighting the fascists with their pens, draw their strength — the strength that will truly make the pen mightier than the sword? This strength can only come from the larger anti-fascist movement that is being generated and strengthened by lakhs of committed activists and cadres in cities and villages, towns and districts, in the *bastis* and *jhopadpattis* all over our country. We journalists will have to join hands with this force. For those who shy away from being 'identified' with organisations or 'labelled', one can only say: the journalists who are acting as the drumbeaters of the fascists are already organised, already identified and already strengthened by the organisations to which they belong and the ideology around which they rally. If we do not learn our lessons from them, we have no future, save the future of compromise with rabid fundamentalism and Hitlerite fascism or a future in which we will be destroyed, without even having fought the battle well.



Bombay: Hindu-Muslim divide or six other divides?

BOMBAY, the financial capital of India was shaken to its roots in January 1993, when the most barbaric communal killings were engineered to instigate a ten day long bloody pogrom against Muslims. The liberal secularists completely paralysed by the total breakdown of law and order could only notice the Hindu-Muslim divide getting sharper and sharper. They could not perceive the historic role played by the toiling masses to counteract the lumpen, fascist mobs. This editorial, published when Bombay was traumatised, points out that the cataclysmic events created six other divides, not noticed by the liberal secularists. What were these six divides and why they are important for the anti-fascist movement is the subject matter of this editorial.



NO event in the history of Bombay has shaken every section of society as much as the systematically engineered communal holocaust and pogrom against Muslims in the city. From the super-duper living on Malabar Hill to the millions sleeping on the pavements — everybody was drawn into its violent vortex. Of course in sharply different ways, but drawn nonetheless.

Shock gives rise to not only fears but also exaggerations. And one of the exaggerations is that the violent events have given rise to an **unbridgeable** Hindu-Muslim divide. Has it? Or has a special bond been created between the thousands and thousands of Hindus who protected and saved Muslims and vice-versa? Has inter-religious hatred intensified, or have millions of people asserted their humanity by expressing disgust and protest against the rioters and solidarity with the victims?

It is harmful to exaggerate and blow out of all proportions the so-called Hindu-Muslim divide. This divide deliberately engineered by the fascists is very much like a deep cut on the body politic. The very conditions of survival and living together can and will heal it. Therefore by exaggerating this divide we would be precisely playing into the hands of the fascists whose main preoccupation is to create and widen such a divide. In fact it is more important to concentrate our attention on the other more important divides which the communal holocaust has sharpened. These divides are not only more important but even positive for the anti-fascist movement. Therefore it is very important to examine them, as they provide directions for all those opposed to fascism.

The first divide

The first divide which has been created, has been **a deep divide between the State machinery on the one hand and the mass of people on the other hand**. Millions of people have helplessly watched the most barbaric killings, the most frenzied arson and looting, the most brazen extortionism, with either no sign of the law, or worse still, with the law looking the other way or encouraging the lumpen mobs.

For the toiling people this face of the "law" was no surprise. They have not only understood, but also experienced the intimate relationship between the "law" and the outlaw. But what a rude shock to the middle and upper classes who realized that no more could the "law" prevent the outlaw from ringing their doorbells. Even that great constitutionalist Mr. Nani Palkhivala had to cry out in anguish that all civil order had broken down in Bombay. So great became the divide between the organs of the State and the people that when the PM announced a judicial inquiry into the riots, everybody dismissed it contemptuously. Here was another of those time-pass exercises to find the guilty, when the guilty had proudly owned up to their crimes!

It has been a common experience of parliamentary democracies that when the Constitution, the courts, the laws, the police are active, the sovereign people go to sleep. They are reduced to become just numbers on the electoral list, activated for five seconds once in five years. However, when the same organs of State are paralysed in times of crisis, it is at this critical juncture that the sovereign people wake up. In Bombay as the people woke up, they were faced with the grimmest of grim truths. **The truth that when the fascists unleash their hordes against well-selected targets, there is no Constitution, no courts, no law, no police, no, not even the military to protect them.** The truth that when the chips are down, the people have to rely only on themselves and their collective strength. The truth that the Constitution, the courts, the law, the police cannot and should never become an alternative to PEOPLE'S POWER, PEOPLE'S DEFENCE AND PEOPLE'S ACTION. So important is this truth, and yet, so prone are we to forget it "as the city limps back to normalcy." And yet this is a truth which the anti-fascist forces can forget only at their own peril. All sorts of illusions will be peddled to ensure that this truth is forgotten.

"The Republican Constitution should be protected at all costs" our liberals will urge. "Fine", say the masses, "but will this Republican Constitution protect us?"

"The law and order machinery should be modernised," our liberals will continue. "Why", ask the masses "in order to more effectively shoot innocents?"

"The courts should be made more stringent", suggest the liberals. "Will they ever try the political leaders behind the riots?", challenge the masses!

When constitutional and administrative remedies replace the independent actions of the masses, then such constitutionalism can only disarm the masses.. We ask the liberals, what happens when the fascists hijack the Constitution and the administrative machinery through a parliamentary election, won through money and muscle-power and communal fanaticism? Is this not a distinct possibility? That is why the divide between the organs of State and the people is significant, **because these very organs of State will be wielded by the fascists tomorrow.**

The second divide

The second divide which the communal holocaust has created, **is a divide between the members of the State machinery itself.** The State machinery is sharply polarised with one section clearly with the fascists and another section forced by events to be opposed to fascism. It is totally one-sided to believe that the whole police force is communalised and is with the fascists. A small section of the police at grave risk to themselves protected innocents, both Muslims and Hindus, who were targeted by fascist goons. This section of the police force is sick with the communal games of the various political leaderships and frustrated at their impotence to protect the lives and property of the people. A fundamental question arises before such a section. How can they oppose the onward march of the fascists who consist of not merely lumpens, but primarily a political leadership which uses these lumpen mobs? By merely mechanically upholding the "sanctity of the law"? What happens when the Bal Thackerays and the Advanis begin dictating the laws?

There is only one honourable option left for this section of the State machinery. This section has to build the closest of ties with the mass of people who live in communal harmony. It has to firmly align itself with the anti-fascist forces

who are organising the people against fascism. If a section of the police is with the fascists and daily strengthens them, is it not the duty of the secular section among the police to be with the anti-fascist forces?

The third divide

The third great divide which the communal holocaust further deepened **was the divide between the Congress Party and the masses.** To put it in the only language which a Congressman can understand: They have lost not only the Hindu vote but also the Muslim vote.

After the Babri Masjid was destroyed on December 6, 1992, the Congress Party still had excuses. "We were deceived by the BJP leadership." "They had promised the Supreme Court."

"It was the duty of the state government to protect the masjid," etc., etc., etc. After the January 6 communal holocaust, jointly unleashed by mafia dons connected to the Congress and the Shiv Sena, the Congress Party has no excuses whatsoever. While lumpen mobs looted, pillaged, burnt, killed and raped, a criminal power struggle was taking place between the Sharad Pawar faction and the Sudhakar Rao Naik faction in the Congress. While it is alleged that the Sharad Pawar faction was behind the big dons and the mafia builders who burnt down slums to clear the land, the Sudhakar Rao Naik faction went out of its way to not only appease but support the SS. No action whatsoever was taken against Shiv Sena leaders who led the mobs. Those that were caught by the army were released by the police. To top it all, SS leaders were even included in the government-sponsored 'peace' committees.

To those who nursed the hope that the Congress Party could oppose the fascists, this hope was dashed to the ground after January 6. So deep was the divide between the Congress Party and the masses that no Congress leader except Mr. Sunil Dutt dared to go out into the masses and the public. Mr. Dutt could do so not only because of his personal courage, but also because he had sent in his resignation as a Member of Parliament.

In the days ahead, as the factional struggles within the Congress Party only intensify, it is clear that the Congress Party cannot and will not halt the fascists. A few leaders and factions along with their grass-root members may help the anti-fascist movement, but not the party as a whole. As a party it can only appease, capitulate and move from impotence to paralysis.

The fourth divide

The next significant divide, which the vicious pogrom against Muslims has created, **is the divide between the Muslim fundamentalist leaderships and the liberal Muslims; between the self-appointed defenders of Islam and the mass of Muslims.**

For the first time liberal and progressive Muslims have spoken up in such large numbers against their fundamentalists, not just in one city but all over the country. A recently held one-day convention in Delhi, attended by more than 500 Muslim intellectuals from all over the country, expressed the thinking of this section of Muslims that have in the past kept silent or been silenced. A report in *The Times of India* on January 27, noted that the participants "yearned for a change. They wanted to rid themselves of the traditional self-proclaimed leadership; they seemed ready to face up to the Mullahs who hold obscurantist views; they looked prepared for a direct showdown with communal forces within their own community; they wanted the Urdu press to play a more positive role, and above all, they searched for a common civic space within the framework of the constitution". At this convention quite a few speakers advocated equal rights for women, and sought modernisation of the Muslim personal laws. Many speakers stressed that minority communalism must be fought along with majority communalism. A number of speakers concentrated on the need for change, modernisation and education within the Muslim community. One speaker stressed that "before the Muslims accuse a section of Hindus of being communal, they should confront the communal section within their own ranks."

How come Muslim liberals have succeeded in confronting for the first time their traditional religio-political leaderships? The reason is because another more important divide has taken place — a divide between the religio-political leaderships and the Muslim masses. The mass of Muslims, living and surviving in grinding poverty, refuse to blindly follow their Muslim fundamentalist leaderships today. In the past, the Muslim fundamentalists had always succeeded in mobilising the masses behind them and thus had silenced the liberals. This was what happened in the Shah Bano case and in a number of other cases.

Today the Muslim toiling masses have lost faith in their traditional leaderships. They refuse to follow en masse their *fatwas* and *firman*s. On Republic Day, the overwhelming mass of Muslims refused to follow the diktat of the Naib Imam of Jama Masjid to hoist black flags. Even on the issue of *namaz* on the roads and over loudspeakers, the Muslim masses refuse to believe that 'Islam is in danger'. Speak to the Muslim masses living in the slums and mohallas and you will immediately notice a deep churning taking place within. Their priority is not rebuilding the Babri Masjid, leave alone on the same spot. All talk of *Jihad* leaves them cold. Their priorities are security, peace, work, their sons who are harassed by the police, etc. **It is because the fundamentalist leaders have been left isolated by the masses that the liberal Muslims can speak out today.** It is because the fundamentalist leaderships have been left without mass-power that the liberals can assert themselves as a group. This is a significant development, full of possibilities and yet full of pitfalls. It can be full of possibilities if liberals and progressive Muslims identify themselves with the problems and concerns of the toiling Muslims.

Millions of Muslims live in the most abominable and oppressive conditions. Liberal Muslims may assert their patriotism by singing hosannas to the Constitution, but the mass of Muslims work in conditions where no labour laws apply in practice, where the police treat the youth as dirt, where they are huddled like animals in miserable hovels. The liberal Muslims can only drive home their advantage against the Muslim fundamentalists if they go to the masses,

identify with their problems and struggles, and provide support and solidarity to their efforts to radically change their conditions. Progressive and liberal Muslims can oppose the onslaught of fascism not in isolation, but by forging the closest of unity with the toiling masses of at least their own community.

This is going to be the most difficult part, because **a section of the Muslim liberals would rather capitulate to the BJP than build ties with their own masses.** It is this section that will fall sucker to the BJP's pseudo struggle against pseudo-secularism. It is this section that will transfer their loyalty from the Congress Party to the BJP in exchange for the protection of their businesses and properties.

The fifth divide

The fifth divide which was palpable and sharp during the communal holocaust **was the divide within the ranks of the educated middle classes itself.** One section of this *babu* middle class which sports a civilised and modern exterior, exposed not only how communal and anti-Muslim it is, but also how lumpenised and criminalised it can get under certain conditions. This section of especially *sarkari and durbari babus* cheered wildly and went berserk as lumpens looted and destroyed Muslim shops and homes. Some of them, or their children, even joined the looting. To them it was like a cricket match where the SS goons smash up the Pakistani team and even dig up the stadium. Many of them were busy phoning each other to find out the score of Muslim shops burnt or Muslim youth killed. Others indulged in the most poisonous and inflammatory gossip from the safe confines of their apartments. When the rich and famous of Bombay held a peace dharna at Flora Fountain, a sample of these educated *babus* literally disrupted their programme and drove them away. They cheered the SS goons who put up the most provocative posters against Mr. V.P. Singh who had undertaken a fast unto death. For the first time this lumpenised middle class is proudly identifying itself with the *Hindutvawadi* fascists. If formerly they were embarrassed to expose or sly enough to hide their real sympathies and

antipathies, today they are exhibiting themselves arrogantly and stridently. Many common people are discovering to their horror that their 'good-hearted' colleagues in the office or bank are today spewing the most reactionary anti-Muslim hatred.

But as stated earlier, the educated middle class is sharply divided. There is another section, especially Hindus, who have been rudely woken up from their slumber and jolted into action against the fascist menace. Thousands of professionals, office-goers, professors, college youth, businessmen, artists, scientists have been revolted by the ugly face of the *Hindutvawadis* and disgusted by their cynical abuse of religion. This section has for the first time galvanised itself into action. Thousands have participated in peace marches and dharnas, collected and distributed relief, helped in relief camps, protected their Muslim or Hindu neighbours at grave risk to themselves, participated in anti-communal and anti-fascist meetings, etc. This is a positive development for the anti-fascist movement.

It should be remembered that one of the major reasons for the successes of the *Hindutvawadis* is that they have won over a section of the vocal and visible middle class. It is this articulate section that brings out their various propaganda papers, magazines, leaflets, booklets, posters. It is this well-connected section consisting of journalists, teachers, accountants, lawyers, artists, etc. who have daily used their professions and positions to further the aims of fascism. The anti-fascist movement cannot grow in size and strength without another section of this articulate and well-connected middle class actively supporting the cause of anti-fascism and democracy. Such a section is growing and will grow as the fascists give up their reasonable and liberal masks and expose their real criminal and ugly faces.

The sixth most important divide

However, the most important divide that emerged in the midst of the killing and destruction **has been a divide between two sharply divergent class outlooks to fight fascism.** It is not merely a divide of class perspectives but a divide between the 'liberal bourgeoisie' which is opposed

to fascism on the one hand and the toiling masses who are also opposed to fascism on the other hand. This divide expressed itself extremely sharply during the 10 days that Bombay burnt. When the fascist monsters took over the streets, the liberal bourgeoisie was not just aghast but also paralysed. The cosmopolitanism of his metropolis was being shattered before his very eyes. He could understand lumpen gangs moving about the slums, but now they were roaming openly where the rich and famous live. The police was nowhere in sight. Armed gangs were moving from house to house extorting protection money. His telephone lines were dead. He could not count on his neighbours who were all locked up behind their teakwood doors, their double-doors and triple-doors. All his business plans had gone awry. Export orders were being cancelled. Foreign collaborators were refusing to collaborate. His hopes that the Advanis and Vajpayees were moderate and reasonable men who could rein in their hordes, were dashed to the ground.

In agonising desperation, the liberal bourgeoisie organised the most voluble opposition to the arsonists and rioters during those traumatic days. Their main demand was emergency, handing over law and order to the military, strict administrative measures, etc. Mr. Nani Palkhivala, Mr. J.R.D. Tata and others were the most articulate advocates of this line of action.

In complete contrast to the liberal bourgeoisie, a large section of the proletariat living in the slums, chawls, *bustees* and *mohallas* galvanised themselves to meet head-on the threat of the lumpens. **A spontaneous mass movement began from below to form armed defence committees, in order to fight back the lumpen mobs.** Men, women, youth and even children mobilised themselves for active defence. These committees were not an isolated or sporadic phenomenon but were widespread throughout Bombay. No one waited for the police to defend them. No one expected it. Literally millions of people kept awake at night. Groups of patrols were formed to take turns in all-night vigilance. Every slum was lit up with extra bulbs and focus lights. Even slums which had no electricity managed to get a temporary connection from a nearby shop or hotel. Barricades

were erected to keep off the marauders. All sorts of weapons from stones and bricks to rods were kept in nearly every home for defence. Even the women kept red chilly powder near at hand. Tea was prepared by them for those who kept vigil. At the call of a whistle, the whole slum or *bustee* would come out to defend the area and to ward off the attackers.

And the most important thing of all — in many Muslim-dominated slums, Hindus were provided not just reassurance, but protection. Likewise, in many Hindu-dominated slums, Muslims were protected. Youth belonging to all communities met, discussed, planned, and when necessary even fought back the raiders. A special eye was kept on potential trouble-makers in the slum. Attempts to instigate the people were foiled. The defence committees which first sprang up in the slums and chawls soon also spread to building societies.

During those turbulent days, secularism for the masses was not an "ism" to be debated. It was not an issue regarding building temples or mosques. Secularism was a life and death struggle for the masses against the forces who were bent on destroying their homes, their livelihoods and their social fabric. Secularism was a life and death struggle to protect their neighbours, their friends who happened to belong to another religion. This living and throbbing secularism was defended by women who do not know how to read or write. It was defended by hungry men who have to starve the moment they don't work. It had nothing to do with the secularism that is sometimes worn by our liberals as their badge of culture and civilization. It was a secularism that demanded sacrifice, solidarity and compassion. That is why when the liberals preach communal harmony to the masses, the same masses stare back uncomprehendingly!


It is true that in some areas the masses did not organise themselves to stop the lumpen mobs from looting and killing. This is not only due to their lack of organisation but primarily because of **terror**. Preaching to them communal peace is meaningless as long as the source of terror is left untouched.

The liberals have the habit of preaching communal peace to the masses because they do not differentiate between the proletariat and the lumpen. The liberals do not understand

that the lumpens are a weapon consciously created and ruthlessly used by the ruling parties against the proletariat. The toiling masses have to live with these lumpens cheek by jowl. During a communal holocaust, when the activity of the lumpens is heightened, the toiling masses can only defend their homes and lives with the only weapons they have at their disposal — people's power, active defence and solidarity.

As we said earlier, there is a sharp divide and cleavage between how the 'liberal bourgeoisie' seeks to contain fascism and how the proletariat fights the fascists. The proletariat has no faith in administrative measures because it is losing all faith in the administration. It is therefore being forced towards relying on itself and on its own strength. This is a threat to not only the fascists but to every bourgeois party. It is not a surprise that no parliamentary party acknowledged the existence of the mass defence committees, let alone gave them direction.

If the mass defence committees learn from their own experiences, coordinate and federate, they can become iron fortresses in the battle against fascism and disintegration. How this historical process can be strengthened is the task of all those who want to go beyond relief measures and prepare for the dangers and challenges that will arise tomorrow.



Can the Women's Movement halt the saffron brigade?

T HIS paper was presented by **Stree Jagruti Samiti** at the seminar on "Women's Liberation and Class Struggle" organised by **The All India League for Revolutionary Culture** at Patna on 14-15 May, 1993. It deals with the secret of the Sangh Parivar's success and points out the crisis faced by petit-bourgeois feminism as a result of this success. It sharply outlines how petit-bourgeois feminism is responding to the challenge posed by the Hindutvawadis and argues how and why its response can only disorient and divert the struggle against fascism.

MY dear comrades,

DURING the last five months, many of us present here must have witnessed first-hand the monstrous barbarism of communal insanity, especially its traumatic wounds on women and children. The cold-blooded engineering of riots; the vicious communal poison vomited by the 'Free press'; the macabre slaughter of innocents while the police looked on or joined in; the blood-curdling gang rapes of our sisters while the video cameras clicked on; the ruthless burning down of homes, hearths and dreams; the desecration of places of worship by 'believers', etc, have now become part of the cultural tradition of India's 'modern' ruling classes. We think it is not necessary for us to dwell on this cultural tradition which stinks of death and decay. Instead we think there is an urgent need to coldly and dispassionately consider a few questions which are staring us in the face today. **How come the communalists are attracting more and more people to their side, including women?** What are their real aims ? How does this affect the women's movement? What are the tasks before revolutionary women activists?

Comrades, it is not necessary to prove to you that the communalists, especially the Sangh Parivar, have won substantial mass support in not only every class and caste in our country but to some extent even among the minorities. In the battle of ideas between the *Hindutvawadis* and Nehruites (which include even the Parliamentary Left), the former are aggressive and on the offensive, winning over new adherents, while the latter are apologetic and defensive. Defensive about everything. Defending the Constitution of India, defending the Supreme Court, defending the 'true essence' of religion and Hinduism, defending Nehruvian secularism. Defending their electoral bases!

The Sangh Parivar's success!

What is the secret of the Sangh Parivar's success? How come rank communalists can win over the minds of so many people including vast sections of the 'educated intelligentsia'?

We cannot understand this phenomenon as long as we mechanically reduce the propaganda of the Sangh Parivar to mere communalism. So many millions of people cannot fall prey to just communalism.

We believe that the central thrust of the Sangh Parivar's ideological onslaught is not merely communalism but **militant nationalism**. "*Garv se kaho, hum Hindu hai*" is not merely a communal slogan. It is primarily a political slogan which aims to generate an aggressive, unashamed, unabashed Hindu nationalism. A nationalism that is supposedly based on the religious beliefs of the majority in this country.

All nationalisms have to target an enemy. That is the way they grow. Wherever and whenever the bourgeoisie was progressive, it targeted feudalism, colonialism or imperialism as the enemies of the people and the nation. But the Hindu nationalism of the Sangh Parivar does not target these enemies. (In fact the backbone of their leadership consists of former maharajas, rajmats and other feudalists). The Hindu nationalism of the Sangh Parivar targets Muslims as the main 'anti-national force' within the Indian nation. It targets the centrist and Left parties as the so-called protectors and defenders of this 'anti-national force'. It targets the Constitution of India which reflects the existing bourgeois democratic system, as anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim. On an international level, it targets Pakistan and Bangladesh as the greatest enemies of the Indian nation.

There is nothing new in the reactionary nationalist propaganda of the Sangh Parivar. What is new is that the same old propaganda is winning over new converts for it in large numbers. Why? A quick glance at its new base of support will help us to understand this secret of its success. Its base of support consists primarily today of **the burgeoning middle class of India** not just in the cities but also in the small towns.

This middle class with 3-4 high income salaries coming into the home, has been able to multiply its wealth through the booming share market and the real estate racket. Rajiv's liberalisation policies gave it overnight all the goodies it pined for, from Hero Hondas to Yankee Doodle ice creams.

As a class it has single-mindedly been involved in one pursuit. *Viz.* to climb the greasy ladder towards nouveau richedom, with an NRI status thrown in if possible. And yet as a class it is acutely conscious that the ladder it is climbing is rickety and shaky. The higher it climbs, the deeper is its fear of falling — the greater is its hatred for the toiling masses below. Its permanent job is getting insecure. Its petty businesses and side-businesses are insecure. The price of its shares could crash tomorrow!

To top it all, is its ambition of ensuring that its grown up sons start life from the top-most rung of the ladder it has reached. Capitation fees, the all-round corruption in the education system and shrinking avenues of high-rise employment have made the competition for them not only murkier but downright cut-throat. In addition, their daughters have to be married off to 'respectable families'. Even if fat dowries are not directly demanded (which is an exception) yet expensive gifts and ornaments have to be paid for, so that "our daughter faces no problems in the future" and "because after all, she is *our* daughter."

It is this 100 million strong middle class, each elbowing their way up on their rickety ladders which is being fatally attracted to the aggressive nationalism of the Sangh Parivar today. The reason is simple. It's "**nation**" is in crisis. It can see Khalistanis and Kashmiri militants tearing apart Punjab and Kashmir. It hears about Naxalites kidnapping the high and the powerful. Even prime ministers despite all their security, could not be protected from the bullets of an assassin or a human bomb. It is witnessing with horror its cities being taken over by the mafia underworld. As a class it is getting more and more paranoid and neurotic.

Worse still, its social fabric is tearing apart at the seams. This middle class wants the goodies of the West and yet hypocritically shies away from the Western culture that comes along with these goodies. He wants to daily watch "The Bold and the Beautiful" on Star TV but is aghast when his daughter insists on going for an all-night party in costumes that would make her grandmother faint. He himself buys his daughter imported jeans, imported shoes, imported make-up, and yet is horrified when she refuses to deck her-

self in a saree and parade coyly when an arranged marriage proposal comes along. He likes to show off the goodies he has acquired to the world, but is shocked when his son-in-law demands some of them through his daughter or even burns her for it. Even on his death bed, he has to watch the spectacle of not only his sons clawing each other over his property, but today also his daughters joining in the fray.

But this is not all. Every rung that this class climbs of the greasy ladder makes it aware of how even more insecure the whole political system is getting. Hijackings, bomb blasts, multi-billion rupee scams, strikes by even pilots and policemen! Could it get worse? **It longs for stability and order.** As a class it is getting disillusioned with the centrist parties. With all the self-righteousness at its disposal, it condemns the Congress party as the fountainhead of corruption and criminalisation. (Although it is itself quick at making a fast buck under the table). It detests the instability of the Janata Dal, not only because of the suicidal ambitions of its factional leaders, but even more so because of Mandal — that 'evil of all evils' which is aimed at snatching away from his 'meritorious' son, a seat in a medical or engineering college and later on a government job and promotion. It is mortally afraid of the communists despite "communism being dead", because this "ism" robs him of his freedom to choose between 50 brands of soap, 10 brands of shampoos and 5 brands of colour TV. Who then is left to save the 'nation'? For this class, the choice is more and more the Sangh Parivar — an organisation whose time has come, he believes.

The Sangh Parivar's halo !

The Sangh Parivar has systematically developed around itself an aura and halo of qualities, some real, some mythical, which makes itself fatally attractive to this middle class.

First, is the iron-clad discipline and organisation of the Parivar with its army of loyal cadres — the most gigantic undivided joint family created to enforce order on this disintegrating society and give it the sense of direction as dreamed by our babus.

Secondly, in a period of national impotence (impotence of the ruling party to solve any fundamental problems faced by the country), the Sangh Parivar's constant reminders of our glorious past and brave history, attempts to psychologically cure the impotence of this middle class.

Thirdly, the Sangh Parivar has very effectively advertised itself as the greatest champion of 'national interests'. It was Murli Manohar Joshi who 'dared' to hoist the national tricolour in Srinagar on January 26, 1992. It is the Sangh Parivar's members who insist on singing Vande Mataram in Parliament. And now it is the Sangh Parivar that is talking of *swadeshi*!

Fourthly, the Sangh Parivar preaches a Hinduism that is militant and aggressive. A Hinduism whose Gods and Goddesses are all armed unlike the "tolerant — offer the other cheek" Hinduism of Gandhi, which the middle class believes already partitioned our country once. **This climbing middle class is attracted to this militant and aggressive Hinduism because it stupidly believes that force can keep together the unity and integrity of the country; effectively deal with Pakistan; and win for India a greater share in the world's markets.**

Fifthly, the Sangh Parivar while turning a blind eye to the shameless consumerism unleashed by foreign multinationals, also hypocritically preaches about austerity, reverence for elders, blind devotion for teachers, women as the self-sacrificing devi, etc. This 'modernism' on a feudal base goes down well with this middle class. Look at the NRI's — the latest converts to the Sangh Parivar and you will understand why their magic works. As NRIs they want the best from the West. The best of cars, the best of champagne, the best of music, the best of fun. But when it comes to choosing a wife, there is nothing like advertising in *The Times of India* for a Brahmin, fair, home-loving girl from India — "an arranged marriage for my pappa and mamma" !

Sixthly, this middle class despite its higher education, its degrees, and its doctorates, **has never struggled against its own feudal upper-caste cultural outlook.** Degrees and doctorates have only succeeded in suppressing this outlook, but deep down it still exists. Caste superiority,

communal prejudices, male supremacy, a superstitious outlook to life, coexist under a veneer of modernism. Nehruvianism created a 'modern culture' wherein this feudal cultural outlook survived, **even while it was embarrassing to openly exhibit it**. Every 'modernist' had to pretend to be against caste, for women's equality, for secularism, for a scientific outlook, etc. Today social and economic contradictions are making it increasingly difficult to keep up this pretense. To be anti-casteist, anti-communal, anti-patriarchal, anti-feudal demands sacrificing one's material interests. And this our yuppies (now turned scuppies) are clearly unwilling to do. The Sangh Parivar has succeeded in removing the shame and embarrassment faced by these saffron-clad yuppies in upholding their feudal-cultural outlook — "*Garv se kaho hum Hindu hai*". "Be proud of your traditions, customs, rituals, and cultural heritage." Swami Vamdev has even gone a step ahead. He upholds with pride 'revered Hindu customs' like sati and polygamy, the caste system and untouchability!

Finally and most importantly, the Sangh Parivar has skillfully exploited the hatred and fear of this climbing middle class for the poor and toiling masses by presently **channelising**, their anger against the Muslims, who as a community have been kept economically and socially backward.

Mind you, this 'educated' middle class knows very well through the press and their own experiences that the overwhelming majority of Muslims (leave alone being pampered) actually suffer from grave economic and social disabilities. But just as they believe the poor to be the culprits behind their own grinding poverty, this babu class blames the Muslim masses for their own backwardness. "They do not want to study." "They prefer to send their children to madrassas instead of modern schools." "They prefer to become *goondas* instead of working hard." "They do not want to give up their backward customs." "They want to get married four times". "They breed like rabbits — *Hum dho hamare dho* — *Wo panch, unke pachees*", etc, etc, etc. That this anti-Muslim hatred of the Hindu middle class is actually an anti-poor hatred, is confirmed by the fact that even many among the

middle and upper class Muslims blame "those Muslims" for their backwardness, poverty and even the riots. It is such upper-class liberal Muslims who are also being won over by the Sangh Parivar's propaganda today.

Reactionary nationalism for fascism!

However, the cadre-based Sangh Parivar is not interested in whipping up this reactionary nationalism as **an end in itself**. The Parivar's game plan is to whip up this aggressive and reactionary nationalist mass movement in order to bring about a **fundamental change in the nature of State power itself**. Their game plan is to completely subvert whatever remains of this bourgeois parliamentary democratic system and **replace it by a fascist State power**. They have fanaticised through the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, large masses of Hindus against Muslims as well as against the centrist and Left parties. They have created armed lumpen storm-troopers who have mercilessly attacked their political opponents, including journalists, social activists, etc. Some of their leaders are openly teaching and writing about scrapping the so-called liberal and progressive sections of the Constitution. They have also won for their cause the support of a large section of the State machinery, e.g. judges, police commissioners, military officers, collectors, government secretaries, etc.

Comrades, — Fascism is the most naked, violent and terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary sections of monopoly capital and imperialist finance capital on the toiling masses. The Sangh Parivar's fascism is intended to serve these reactionary classes. These reactionary sections are daily finding even this rotten democracy a burden! Encounter deaths, police and jail detentions, fascist attacks on trade unions and mass organisations, suppression of the press, public lynchings, war hysteria, martial law, pogroms against entire communities, etc, are the only methods they have to ensure their increasing loot of the people and to save their 'nation'.

The Narasimha Rao government's New Economic Policy dictated by the IMF/World Bank has converted India from a semi-colony into a neo-colony of Imperialism. **This**

government's import-dependent growth and export-dependent survival policies are making fascism a necessity for these reactionary exploiter classes. Consider the following facts.

1. These 'patriotic' ruling classes have burdened the country with a foreign debt of about Rs. 2,77,000 crores, i.e. every family carries a debt of about Rs. 16,000 on its head. Every year thousands of crores of rupees are being extracted from our starving people to pay back just the interest on these loans. Taxes on all essential commodities are being indiscriminately hiked. Fresh loans are being taken just in order to pay back old loans and thus our people and country are being forcibly pushed into the jaws of a debt trap. Can these increasing sums of money be extracted every year for debt servicing without imposing fascism?

2. In order to acquire the foreign exchange required for this debt servicing, our traitorous rulers have to 'export at all costs or perish'. Basic foodstuffs like cereals, fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, eggs are being exported while the masses starve. The most inhuman working conditions are being institutionalised in the export-processing zones which employ lakhs of unorganized women workers, so that foreign capitalists are attracted by our dirt cheap labour. Can our rulers win this cut-throat competition for export markets, without cutting the throats of the people through fascist methods of exploitation?

3. In order to earn the foreign exchange required for this debt servicing, our traitorous leaders are out to auction everything — our land, our forests, our raw materials, our water — to the highest bidder who offers dollars, pounds, yen, marks. Will these ruling classes be able to control the wrath of the tribals and peasants, without fascism?

4. In order to get foreign exchange for debt servicing, foreign multinationals are not only being allowed to control fertilisers, electricity, pesticides, but now even salt and seeds. These multinationals have produced seeds which can only be used for one harvest, forcing the farmer to purchase seeds every year from them at higher and higher prices. Can this loot be sustained without fascism?

5. Export-dependent survival will demand not just exploitation of cheap wages but also the constant introduction of newer and newer technologies which have to be imported. Lay-offs, retrenchments, closures will have to be continuously enforced on the working class, as machines replace hands; as industry after industry collapses in the ruthless competition for global markets. Can the growing contradictions thus unleashed, be crushed without fascism?

6. In order to earn foreign exchange for debt-servicing, foreign capital is being wooed indiscriminately, destroying cottage industry and small-scale industries. Recently the government gave Cargill (a US multinational) 15,000 acres of land in Gujarat for salt manufacture which will bankrupt thousands of small salt manufacturers. Can the social turmoil created by these bankruptcies be contained without fascism?

IMF slavery will lead to fascism!

Fellow Comrades, We are clear about one thing. **IMF slavery today means fascism tomorrow.** Today the Congress Party with its New Economic Policies is laying the economic basis for fascism. Tomorrow the Sangh Parivar will take over from it. Nowhere in the third world, has even the rotten and half-empty democracy of the bourgeoisie survived when the IMF has taken over. In Latin America and large parts of Africa and Asia, IMF/WB conditionalities are being implemented through military and fascist dictatorships. E.g. In Brazil, mothers have had to feed their children newspapers soaked in water in order to keep them alive. Further, para-military fascist squads routinely massacre innocent children living on pavements to terrorise the masses and keep them silent and under control.

Women and children have become the greatest victims of IMF/WB engineered fascism and dictatorships. The main burden of running a family in the midst of skyrocketing inflation, grinding poverty, rampant unemployment, nerve-racking social tensions and trauma falls on the shoulders of women. They are forced to see their hungry children quit school to seek employment in the capitalist jungle. Malnutrition and anemia eat into their bodies caus-

ing untold mental depression and psychiatric disorders. Alcoholism, wife beatings, suicides, desertions, increase as some of the menfolk remove all their frustrations and anger on their helpless wives and children. In thousands of cases, prostitution becomes the only means of survival. In such a sordid situation, TV and Video which churn out a world of make-believe dreams and illusions become their major means of temporary escape from their daily oppression and degradation. Is it any wonder then that as the fascists spread their tentacles deeper throughout society, the ruling classes are busy spreading TV and Star TV to the remotest of villages which do not even have drinking water?

Fascism and social barbarism!

But this is not all. Fascism engineers a resurgence of religious fanaticism and through this seeks to enforce the most barbaric feudal values, customs and laws on women, while simultaneously pushing them into the capitalist jungle. The essence of **this barbarism lies in the fact that the fascist State institutionalises the discrimination and subjugation of women in the family and in society.** It is no surprise that the *Hindutvawadis* have been the most unashamed champions of Hindu traditional laws to govern marriage, family and social matters, as these laws gave Hindu upper caste men the right of polygamy, the sole right over children, the sole right over property, the right to harass and exploit widows or even burn them in sati, the right to extract dowry, the right to use devdasis, the right to commit the most heinous violence against women! Thus it is no surprise that the *Hindutvawadis* have been the most vociferous opponents of even the half-hearted legal reforms in Hindu laws carried out by Congress governments. (E.g. The Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, Hindu Custody and Guardianship Act, etc, etc.)

Likewise the Muslim fundamentalists who play a complementary role to the Hindu fascists believe in enforcing on Muslim women the most reactionary personal laws under the guise that these laws receive their sanction from the Shariat.

Thus fascism forcibly suppresses through barbaric social laws the insoluble contradiction created by, on the one hand more and more women demanding education, employment, promotions, property rights, equality in the workplace and at home and on the other hand a class-divided society in crisis, which finds it impossible to fulfil these aspirations, even for a few women. Fascism signifies the utter bankruptcy of the exploiter ruling classes to continue even the facade of bourgeois reforms for women. Under fascism the historical wheel of progress and reform is forcibly pushed back by unleashing terror on women!

A quick look at fascist states based on religion, exposes how a reign of terror is unleashed to crush the personalities of women and to forcibly subjugate them. In Pakistan, hundreds of women are casually butchered in the villages under the bizarre code of "Karo Kari" for merely talking to men outside the family. In 1985, Zia-ul-Haq passed the Hudood ordinance which had the sanction of the mullahs. Under this despicable law the rapists of a woman could easily escape scot-free while the raped woman if she complained could herself be accused of being "an adultress". To add insult to injury, the evidence of *two women* is equal to the evidence given by *one man*. Hundreds of innocent women have been jailed because of such inhuman laws.

In Khomeini's Iran, women had no right to give evidence in a court of law. All institutions, creches, which looked after the children of working women were closed down so that women were forced to quit their jobs and only look after children. The medical, scientific, legal and engineering professions were banned for women. The *chador* was reintroduced, etc, etc.

The Sangh Parivar may protest that their Hindu Rashtra will be just the opposite of an Islamic State. This is mere deception. Take the case of Nepal, the only known Hindu Rashtra in the world. The Hindu kingdom of Nepal is notorious for its system of *devdasis* called Brahmakumaris — a system of prostitution sanctioned and sanctified by religion. As a result there are more than one lakh Hindu Nepali women selling their bodies in Indian brothels. This is not all. What has the Sangh Parivar to say about its top

women leaders like the Rajmata Scindia of Gwalior publicly supporting sati? Has the Sangh Parivar or its organisations till today carried out any agitation against dowry murders? There is only one conclusion we can reach. The Hindu Rashtra promised by the Sangh Parivar will be a mirror image of the Islamic States of Pakistan and Iran.

Fellow Comrades, this then is the direction in which the ruling classes are pushing our country today. This has important implications for the women's movement. It has especially **important implications for the direction the women's movement must take** in the turbulent nineties ahead.

The crisis of petit-bourgeois feminism !

Fascism actively seeks a base of support in the middle classes. The Sangh Parivar is becoming increasingly successful in winning over not only large numbers of men of this class but also the **women**. This has created the greatest crisis for petit-bourgeois feminism today as this **feminism not only expresses the social heart burns and aspirations, but also reflects the restricted outlook and limited practice of this growing class of petit-bourgeois middle-class women** — Women who suffer social discrimination but whose class interests today prevent them from struggling for a people's democratic revolution.

A number of feminist activists (who are secular) are discovering to their horror that those very women who would be the loudest to complain against the harassment of inlaws or the burden of house work and child care (despite employing *bais* and *ayahs*) are now turning towards reactionary nationalism and fascism. A number of feminists are discovering to their shock that the very same class of women who would demand equal property rights for women are gladly turning a blind eye when the Muslims are dispossessed of their properties in pogroms. The same women who claim "*hum kisise kum nahin*" (we are not inferior to anyone) are today shouting "*Jho mange Babri uske din hai aakri*" (Those who ask for Babri have their days numbered). The same women who would sympathise with "Women's power" are now willing to join the Rashtra Sevikas and Durga Vahinis

where women are trained to fight the “enemy”, *viz.* Muslims, ‘pseudo-secularists’ and even feminists. This is the reason why a number of feminists are in a state of confusion, paralysis and ‘soul-searching’ today. They can see the fascists holding aloft the banner of Manusmriti, but worse, not just men, but even educated women, office-going women and housewives from the middle class marching to the drum beat of the fascists. This is the crisis faced by petit-bourgeois feminism today!

During the last 15 years what went in the name of the “women’s movement” was dominated by this petit-bourgeois outlook (exceptions granted). When a group of 100 women protested against a dowry murder, this struggle was certified to be a part of the women’s movement. However, when lakhs of tribal, Dalit and landless women fought side by side with their menfolk against landlordism, money-lending, State repression, etc, and in that process changed their social position and consciousness, this struggle was not supposed to be part of the “women’s movement”. It was labelled the “Left” movement. And to top it all, this Left movement was constantly accused of “neglecting the women’s question”. It was accused of being infatuated with the class question and ignoring the ‘women’s question’, so much so that some Left comrades not just developed a complex about this, but were also over-influenced by these ‘critiques’.

Under the guise of ‘women’s liberation’, the unity of **ALL** women against patriarchy was declared. International Working Women’s Day was converted into International Women’s Day (the day of the Sadhvi Rithambaras and Uma Bhartis and Vijayraje Scindias as well as the day of the toiling women!). Class struggles and revolutionary political propaganda and actions were not considered the means to fight patriarchy. (Bourgeois women and their maid servants are supposed to be sisters!) Instead what we witnessed, was legal reformism actively supported by the State. The struggle to tighten ‘x’ section of the rape law and ‘y’ section of the anti-dowry Act. The struggle to have reserved jobs and seats for women. (In the Bombay Municipal Corporation where there are such reservations; most of the women seats were bagged by the SS and Congress ‘women leaders’ with

their husbands faithfully remaining the power behind the petticoats). Any attempt to expose the limits or even frauds behind these reforms was immediately frowned down upon and condemned.

However, the important thing to understand is that this petit-bourgeois feminism could flourish as long as the centrist parties were strong. As long as India could comfortably pretend to wear the facade of being the world's largest secular democracy. With the growth of the fascist forces and the weakening of the centrist parties, this petit bourgeois feminism has been reduced to not only confusion and paralysis, but can also play a very **disarming** role in the future.

It can play a disarming role because petit-bourgeois feminism is also opposed to the growth of communalism and fascism, as under the latter the social discrimination and violence against women will not only intensify but also be institutionalised with State patronage. **However, being petit-bourgeois in nature, this feminism will refuse to struggle and organise against the class-roots of fascism.** It will refuse to ideologically and organisationally prepare the masses, especially the women for a people's democratic revolution against imperialism which is the only way to defeat fascism.

It is therefore of fundamental importance for revolutionary women activists and organisations to understand how this disarming role is being played today. If we walk in the shadow of this role, we will not be able to aggressively counter the propaganda of the fascists. We will be unable to win over to our side honest feminists who still have not decisively broken with petit-bourgeois feminism.

Two line struggle!

How is petit-bourgeois feminism reacting to the growth of fascism today?

1. First of all, petit-bourgeois feminism undermines the struggle against fascism by reducing it to a struggle against communalism. Petit-bourgeois feminism refuses to see how even this growth of communalism has its roots in the vested

interests of reactionary exploiter classes and their political parties. Instead, for petit-bourgeois feminism, **the root cause behind the growth of communalism is patriarchy**. Hence anti-patriarchy is their social programme to fight communalism, while politically they will talk about “redefining secularism” or “overcoming the weaknesses of Nehruvian secularism”. We believe that fascism cannot be defeated by any number of definitions or redefinitions of secularism. Since fascism is a reactionary nationalist movement which culminates in the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary classes, it can only be defeated by a people’s democratic revolution. To ideologically and politically prepare the people, especially the women, for this revolution is our task. Only from a revolutionary platform can we decisively defeat the fascists in the battle of ideas. Petit-bourgeois feminism will constantly seek to subvert and divert this task.

2. Petit-bourgeois feminism is incapable of countering the reactionary nationalism of the fascists because it **refuses to expose who owns and controls this nation** — its land, its factories, its wealth, its raw materials, its institutions, its religious places, etc, etc. Hence the bogus nationalism and patriotism of the fascists cannot be undermined by this feminism.

3. Another way in which the revolutionary process is subverted by petit-bourgeois feminism is by the constant preaching of the message of “peace” to the masses, who are themselves victims of communal violence. This infatuation with the peace of the graveyard is connected with their ideological outlook. **For petit-bourgeois feminism all violence has its roots in patriarchy**. “Men worship violence! Women stand for peace and non-violence!”

We reject this ‘peace’ which disarms the people and makes women easy targets of rapists and criminals. We uphold the right of the masses to organise themselves and defend even with arms, their lives and properties from the attacks of fascist mobs and rioters. During the communal riots in Bombay, **while petit-bourgeois feminists were wailing for peace, the toiling masses in hundreds of slums, especially the women, began a mass movement from below**

to form defence committees. Women played a leading role in these mass defence committees by arming themselves with sticks, chilly powder, etc; providing tea for sentries who guarded the slums at night; giving relief for the homeless; using mass pressure against trouble-makers and anti-social elements. This is the fighting heritage we uphold. If the fascists can organise a thousand women in Durga Vahinis, our toiling sisters can raise a force of a hundred thousand!

4. Further, petit-bourgeois feminism can only respond to the growth of fascism by clinging even more fervently to the present constitutional order, which is getting discredited every minute. Their only response is to vigorously uphold the Constitution, the primacy of law and order, the sanctity of the courts. At most their solutions extend to suggesting changes in the constitutional order like banning communal parties, making the electoral laws more stringent, — in short, defending Nehruvianism against the onslaught of *Hindutvawad*. In fact such secularists have become the greatest defenders of the status quo. On the other hand, one of the reasons for **the attraction of the fascists has been their ability to exploit the burning desire of the masses for change.** They have won over especially the youth, by their unashamed attack and abuse of bourgeois democratic institutions of power, *viz.* the law, the courts, parliament, etc, which the masses themselves are losing faith in. We cannot win over the masses by upholding these institutions but by using them, as well as exposing whom these institutions of power serve. By exposing how each of these institutions either through their direct connivance or impotence actually help the fascists.

5. The only way petit-bourgeois feminism opposes the abuse of religion by the fascists is to preach how "religion does not teach us to hate", Religion is love and tolerance", etc. Some feminists even claim that because men control religion it results in communalism. It is disarming for revolutionary women activists to blindly follow this outlook. **We have to instead direct the attention of women to the financial muscle power of religion, *viz.* the trusts.** We have to expose how crores of rupees, gold, silver, jewels, etc, are collected in the name of religion by these trusts. We

have to expose how land reforms are subverted by diverting surplus land to these so-called religious trusts. How bonded slaves and even children toil on properties owned by these trusts. How all this public wealth is not accountable to the people. How this wealth is diverted to fatten the custodians of religion and in many cases even used for communal and political purposes. Unless the masses can exercise control over these monies collected in the name of religion, the fascists will continue to milk the religious trusts for their nefarious activities.


6. Finally, petit-bourgeois feminism refuses to expose **the umbilical connection between the IMF-dictated policies, and the growth of fascism.** At best they separate both processes. (The struggle for secularism has got nothing to do with the struggle against IMF-dictated policies, and vice versa the struggle against the New Economic Policy (NEP) has got nothing to do with the struggle against communalism). Some feminists support the NEP even while they express their indignation against communalism. We believe that the struggle against fascism is intrinsically connected to the struggle against the NEP and imperialism. We believe that the fulcrum of this struggle against the NEP and imperialism is the struggle against the foreign debt. Each and every policy of the ruling classes from import-dependent growth to export-dependent survival has its source in the exigency of debt repayment. It is a question of time before **cancellation of the foreign debt must become the central slogan of the people's democratic revolution.**

Revolutionary women activists should **consistently connect up this central revolutionary slogan to every question and struggle launched by women.** Whether it is a struggle for drinking water in the slums or the struggle for land in the villages; whether it is a struggle against alcoholism or the struggle against the exploitation of women workers in the export zones — cancellation of the foreign debt should be focussed in all our campaigns. If for the fascists the demand of "Ram Mandir" has become their central slogan, for the anti-fascist movement "Cancellation of the foreign debt" is the only slogan which not only consistently

opposes the NEP but also exposes the fraudulent nationalism of the fascists.

Every woman, even those behind the *purdah* or *burkha*, understands what happens to a family in the clutches of a moneylender. Everything has to be mortgaged, land, home, ornaments, children and even honour. This is what is happening to our country today. It is a mockery to talk of women's liberation when the country is mortgaged to the imperialists and is in the stranglehold of the fascists. It is a fraud on women if the movement for women's emancipation is not made an intrinsic part of the anti-imperialist, anti-fascist movement.

Comrades, we are living at a time of great turbulence and challenge. The crisis among the ruling classes is not only creating the grounds for fascism but is also creating the grounds for revolution. This revolutionary situation can either be dissipated or it can be used to strengthen the revolutionary forces in the country today. If we wish to release the gigantic strength and energies which our toiling sisters possess, let us sharply demarcate ourselves from petit-bourgeois feminism. Let us not teach our toiling sisters to aspire for crumbs from the table of the rulers or to expect peace from criminals and tyrants. Let us instead inspire and prepare them to become the rulers of tomorrow.



The historic significance of Bombay's Defence Committees!

THE article below has been extracted from the booklet, "The Bombay which the fascists could not burn!" brought out by the **Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi** in February 1993. It analyses in detail the historic significance of the mass defence committees which were formed in hundreds of slums in Bombay, against the fascist lumpen mobs who had virtually taken over the city. It points out how common Hindu and Muslims came together to protect each other and uphold in practice the most glorious traditions of secularism and democracy. For all those filled with despair at the growing dark clouds of fascism, it showed which class in Indian society could and would effectively challenge the fascists.

BOMBAY has a population of more than 10 million people. The majority are Hindus, but a sizable section are Muslims and other minorities. As many as 70 per cent of the population live on the pavements, in congested slums and chawls. If communal frenzy and religious barbarism were really to grip the masses, it would leave behind lakhs of people dead.

It is not that conditions were not created for such a holocaust. The breaking of the Babri Masjid on December 6 and its fallout in the country, especially Bombay, had already raised the communal temperature. Then began the political organisation of *maha-aartis* by the BJP-SS which deliberately not only disrupted traffic, but were used to mobilise and incite Hindus against *namaz* on the roads and the use of loudspeakers from mosques. When the 'riots' actually broke out, there were at least 30,000 lumpens and criminals who formed mobs in search of easy targets to loot, kill, burn and even rape. The police force was by and large paralysed, with a section even actively supporting the rioters. During all this, a criminal power struggle was going on in the ruling Congress Party between the Pawar faction and the Sudhakar Rao Naik faction with the latter turning a blind eye to the mayhem of the SS. A big section of the 'educated and cultured' middle class, were emotionally with the lumpen mobs, cheering them and defending their actions in private and in public. Marathi papers like *Samnaa* were daily inflaming the most dangerous communal passions and tensions. Some of the Urdu papers were not lagging behind. Big builders and big traders were dishing out huge sums to mob leaders to burn down slums or to get rid of rival businesses. Thus we see that all the objective conditions were created for a mass slaughter to take place. Despite all this, the number of victims were contained at 650 dead and about 1,700 injured. How come?

There were two main reasons for this. First of all the masses are not communal and criminal, despite what our modern secularists may think of them. In fact the educated middle class babus proved to be more communal and fascist than the toiling masses. Of course the masses have communal prejudices that are constantly fed to them by 'the

educated.' However, these prejudices do not turn them into savages and murderers.

The second reason is that in Bombay, the working people quickly organised themselves into **armed defence committees** to not only maintain peace but also to repel any outside mob. Without these defence committees, the communal and lumpen elements within slums would have exploited the situation, creating a spiral of violence that would have claimed thousands and thousands of victims. In fact the defence committees which were first formed in slums and chawls soon spread to some buildings and housing colonies. Of course in many buildings their motive was "to prevent those *zhopadpattiwallahs* from attacking" or "to defend themselves from Muslims who are coming." However, the important thing is that huge masses of people organised themselves and with the help of simple weapons kept off the fascist mobs. This is of historic significance and there are important lessons to be learnt from this.

No faith in political parties!

The first significance of the mass defence committees is that they signalled the complete lack of faith of the masses in parliamentary political parties. In every slum and chawl, there was a common refrain. "The mandir-masjid dispute is only a struggle for power and we common people have to suffer." "All these leaders are only interested in our votes." "We have lost faith in all political parties."

However, this lack of faith in all political parties did not lead to cynicism and paralysis. **It led to mass action.** This is important because lack of faith in politicians and political parties is dangerous if it does not give rise to alternative mass actions. In Bombay, while faith in established political parties dipped to zero, the masses discovered and asserted a new found faith in **themselves**, in their united strength, in their collective solidarity. Where millions of people kept awake at night, patrolling their areas, reassuring minorities, foiling the attempts of anti-socials to foment trouble, they began discovering their own power — **PEOPLE'S POWER!**

Sinking their political differences!

The loss of mass faith in political parties forced all political workers belonging to different parties to sink their political differences, forget their party affiliations, ignore their past disputes and to become ONE against the external aggressor. In the defence committees, nobody was a Congressi or Shiv Sainik, Communist or Republican party worker. All had to come together. All came together. In the past, all these political affiliations and political identities divided the toiling masses. If one slum committee was patronised by a Congress *neta*, another rival committee was in the pockets of an SS corporator. During every election, each of these political leaderships would give a bagful of notes to their yes-men to set up booths, organise *padyatras* and even to buy votes. All this led to splits and fights in every slum. The masses were lined up like sheep behind these rival political leaderships who gave big promises and then betrayed them.

The defence committees saw the opposite process taking place. Political loyalties dissolved under mass pressure and the struggle against the outside mobs. Dependence on political parties was drastically reduced. Self-reliance, reliance on each other, became keywords. This was the second significance of the defence committees.

It was because of this significance that no parliamentary party **even recognised** the existence of these armed defence committees nor attempted to give them direction. All the parties from the 'secular' Congress Party to the *Hindutva* BJP were united on this one point —ignore the defence committees, pretend as if they don't exist. This was not surprising. If the defence committees during crisis develop into "people's committees" when 'normalcy' is restored, would anyone bother about these political leaderships? That is why the defence committees were deliberately ignored. That is why we say to the people —"Ignore such political leaderships. But at no cost ignore your defence committees. Understand their historic importance and develop them further."

Mass actions from below!

The third significance of the defence committees was that they were truly the result of mass actions from below. They were not formed in only a few slums and chawls but in hundreds of slums and chawls. Millions of people were involved in all-night vigilance and patrolling. Thousands of women — some even behind the *ghunghat* or *burkha*, mobilised themselves to fight the outside mobs. Even children played an important role in alerting the elders.

In the past, only a part of a chawl or slum could be mobilised for any struggle — at very few times, the whole slum. In the work of defence, everybody was mobilised. People of all castes and creeds came together. In the defence committees there was no Hindu-Muslim divide. In fact the opposite took place. A special bond developed between Hindu and Muslim neighbours.

In areas, especially in middle class areas, where the Hindu-Muslim divide was not overcome, defence committees could not be formed. Such areas were terrorised by lumpen mobs who looted, killed, raped and burnt. There is a lesson in this for all the people. Unite together or be terrorised separately!

Order — when civil order breaks down!

The fourth significance of the defence committees is that they arose as a response to the impotency of the police or even the military to stop the fascist mobs. Everywhere the common complaint was "We have lost faith in the police. The police cannot protect or defend us." But what was significant was that the people did not stop there. They began collectively organising for their own defence and protection. When the *Sarkari* police turned impotent, the masses became their own police. The defence committees were embryonic people's militias.

Not only were the people armed with simple weapons but they maintained their own order and discipline. The most elaborate tactics of defence were worked out. This development is important for the future when the fascists will create conditions of civil strife and civil war.

At the best of times, the toiling people could hardly rely on the police for protection. Now even less. The reason is that the fascists have won a sizable section of the police to their side. This section not only did nothing while the rioters went berserk, but in many cases even encouraged them. In a number of cases, they instead arrested the common people who were defending their *zhopadpattis*. Of course there is a section of the police that is secular and anti-fascist. It was this section that understood how helpless they were and hence went out of their way to help the defence committees. In future, this section can only fulfil their responsibilities by building the closest of links with the toiling people and the anti-fascist, anti-communal forces.

Rejecting *mantras* of peace!

The fifth significance of the defence committees is that they decisively rejected the pseudo-Gandhian outlook of fighting fascism by merely mouthing *mantras* of peace and non-violence. This pseudo-Gandhian outlook has especially been propagated by the Congress Party for the consumption of the masses, while the fascists have been allowed to build all kinds of *senas* under Congress patronage. Sermons have been preached to the toiling masses to remain peaceful while the fascist lumpens perpetrate violence and terror. "Law and order" is for the common man who honestly slaves for a living, while the fascists are allowed to break any law or order with impunity.

The defence committees broke through this web of deceit. Peace was defended by the masses through simple weapons. The terror of the fascist mobs was resisted through mass defence. The instigation of the communalists was firmly put down through vigilance and mass pressure. The role of the police to maintain "law and order" was replaced by the people themselves maintaining law and order.

Today a number of political parties are talking of fighting communalism and fascism. How come, they refused to recognise the historic significance of the defence committees? How come they refused to support this process from above? How come they refused to demand that the people's defence committees be given State recognition? Is it because they want

to deceive the people with pseudo-Gandhian peace? Or do they believe that the fascists who have built private *senas* can be stopped with the help of the police and the military? What happens when the fascists come to power in Delhi? It is time political activists belonging to different political parties confront their leaderships on these questions.

Two divergent outlooks!

The sixth significance of the defence committees was that they brought to the fore two sharply divergent outlooks of dealing with the monster of fascism. On the one hand was the outlook of the liberal bourgeoisie and on the other hand was the outlook of the toiling masses. A section of the bourgeoisie was shocked with how the lumpen mobs ravaged their "beloved city." Bombay was not only their financial capital but also the place where they and their families lived and socialised. But what affected them most was: "What would happen to their foreign collaborations?" "What would happen to their export orders?" "What would happen to all their corporate plans?"

Out of this "anguish of heart and soul", the bourgeoisie began vociferously making the most 'tough' demands. "Clamp partial emergency!" "Hand over the city to the military!" "Modernise the police force!" etc, etc, etc. In short, the only solution the bourgeoisie saw was to further strengthen the State machinery.

This was not surprising. The exploiter classes are not opposed to the lumpens *per se*. In fact it is considered sound business practice to use them from time to time to crush the workers. As far as the bourgeoisie is concerned, the lumpens can terrorise the masses in the slums 24 hours of the day or night. That is not his concern. They are only affected when the lumpens start affecting business and profits; when the lumpens bring even Malabar Hill and Marine Drive to a halt! Tomorrow if the BJP can 'control and contain' the various *senas* better than the Congress, the bourgeoisie will not hesitate to support the BJP — all this while they are singing the virtues of secularism.

The toiling masses on the other hand have very little faith in tough "administrative measures." They know that all the

modernisation of the police will finally be used to crush their own struggles — not the lumpen class. The goondas will be arrested from the front door and released by the back door. Their political patrons will protect them and get them released on bail. The toiling people on the other hand, will rot in lock-ups and jails. Therefore, their lack of faith in tough "administrative measures."

The toiling masses instead require measures which can help them to rely on their own strength and power. The defence committees were an attempt to build this strength and power. With this strength and power they kept the lumpen mobs from tearing apart the city. If this strength and power is consolidated, they can get rid of not just the lumpen class but the source of lumpenisation itself.

The exploiter classes have always deliberately prevented this strength and power of the masses from developing. That is why today there is a near conspiracy of silence about these defence committees. No exploiter class or parliamentary political party can and will tolerate these defence committees being given a permanent form. What would happen if these defence committees set up in hundreds of areas, formed a huge federation? What would happen if the tens of thousands of youth who patrolled the areas and maintained communal peace began organising themselves into people's militias and conducted weekly drills and parades just as the RSS does? What would happen if these people's defence committees used their power against corruption in the ration system, against black marketeering and hoarding? What would happen if these people's defence committees used their power against government corruption? What would happen if the people's defence committees used their power against bootlegging, slumlordism and other criminals, who are patronised by the ruling party to keep the people under constant terror? What would happen if the people's defence committees used their power against MPs, MLAs, corporators, who break their promises? Such a political system would strike terror in the hearts of all exploiter political parties. Hence the conspiracy to let the defence committees disintegrate and die. Hence the conspiracy to ensure that this IDEA does not take root and grip the masses. Hence

the people's defence committees were totally ignored, as if they did not exist. With the exception of a few journalists, the press did not cover this historic process. There were hundreds of horrifying photographs of arson, lootings and of the lumpen mobs. How many photographs appeared in the newspapers of the people of Bombay protecting their homes by night? There were photographs of Shiv Sainiks in all the dailies. How many photographs did you see of the real sainiks who defended the people of Bombay? Doordarshan beamed to us the usual hypocritical messages of discredited politicians and ministers asking the people to maintain peace. How come no programme showed how simple womenfolk organised for peace with *laatnis* (rolling pins) and chilly powder?

What was worse, was how some 'leaders' went out of their way to disarm the defence committees. On the one hand SS leaders who themselves were roaming with arms were demanding that the homes of the common people be searched by the police, under the guise that "the Muslims had stored arms." On the other hand, rival leaders were also demanding such a police search "to prove how 'peaceful' the Muslims are."

The exploiter parties can be expected to disintegrate the people's defence committees and kill this important idea. But will we the toiling people allow this to happen? Will we ourselves kill the defence committees by saying: "Bombay has come back to normal". "It is the job of the police to maintain law and order now and not ours."

Every day we complain that *sab party chor hai*. We are all pining for a real alternative. The people's defence committees can grow into a powerful alternative — if not today, then tomorrow. It can grow into a powerful alternative which will shake the foundations of this exploitative and oppressive system. An alternative that can resist successfully the onslaught of the fascist forces.

One thing is sure. The people's defence committees could arise **spontaneously** in a period of crisis. However, they can only grow into a mighty alternative with the **conscious** determination and sacrifices of thousands of people who have experienced the magic of this idea!

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One of the biggest weaknesses of the secular forces has been their tendency to dismiss Hindutvawad as merely rabid, reactionary communalism. Mechanically parroting that Hindutvawad is communal, only helps to fog its real nature, its real strength and its real goal — its goal of becoming a ruling ideology. Its goal of replacing a discredited and bankrupt Nehruvianism as the ruling ideology. Communalism can never be the ideology of any ruling class in modern society. It can only be a means. Unleashing the most rabid Hindu communalism against especially Muslims, is a means for Hindutvawad. It is a means to redefine nationalism. A means to generate a reactionary and aggressive nationalism to serve the ruling classes in crisis and in transition. A means to use this nationalism to reorganise State power on fascist lines.

